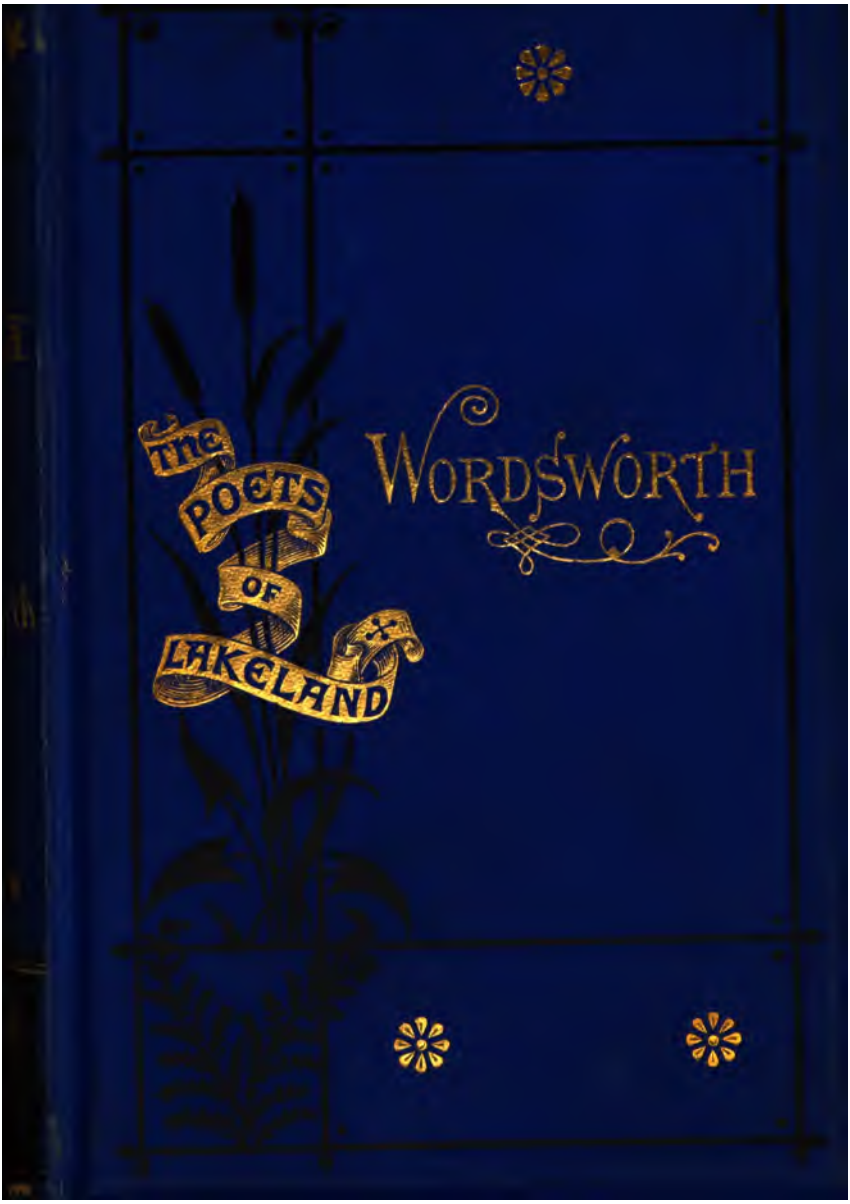
THE POETS OF LAKELAND
WORDSWORTH

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II.

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WILLIAM WORDSWORTH.

1874.

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CONTAINING EXTRACTS FROM THE EXCURSION,
THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE,
THE BROTHERS, MICHAEL, LAODAMIA,
SONNETS, AND MINOR POEMS.

WITH A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR,

BY T. LINDSEY ASPLAND.

LONDON: SIMPKIN MARSHALL, AND CO.
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1874.

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MINOR POEMS.

MEMOIR.

THE history of Literature, as well as that of those ambitious pursuits which more excite the passions of men, unpleasantly reveals a prevailing disposition to persecute, to the extent at least of ridicule, every Reformer who seeks to lead from error to truth. The treatment experienced by William Wordsworth forms no exception to this habit of the public, but on the other hand very few innovators have been permitted to witness such a reaction in the public taste in their favour as came to his lot.

It will now, we suppose, be conceded that the indifference with which his early poems were received, and the opposition which he subsequently encountered in his attempt to rear a new standard of poetic taste, were in great part due to his choice of subjects, perhaps unworthy in themselves to figure in poetry, and to the very extravagance of the simplicity of the style in which they were treated. Another less effectual hindrance to the instant and enthusiastic acceptance of his works may perhaps be traced to the history of the author's mind. In early life, though consistently democratic in all his political opinions, he is also represented as taking pleasure in running counter, rather indiscriminately, to all conventional usages, and in defying received opinions simply because they were received. So in 'The Prelude, or growth of a Poet's mind,' an autobiographical poem, finished in 1805,

when referring to his independent mode of study as a proud unkind rebellion against the wishes of his friends, he confesses to having given way to an overlove of freedom, which moved him to turn away even from regulations of his own imposition as from the bonds of a tyranny.

Southey has somewhere denounced the many-headed reading public as a foul feeder; be that as it may, the monster prefers to choose its own morsels, and having been, up the period of which we treat, pampered into an unhealthy state by the false sentimentality and inflated verbiage of its recent caterers, it was not likely to relish the simple homely fare offered to it in such productions as the 'Idiot Boy', or 'Goody Blake' and 'Harry Gill': though these poems are stated by their author to have afforded to some select minds exquisite delight, and though they were amongst the number of those selected by Charles James Fox as worthy of peculiar commendation.

The Reviewers were for the most part incredulous of novelties, particularly from an unknown source, and on their first appearance hailed these poems with a shout of derision. Finding the public not unwilling to join in the laugh, at each re-issue of, or addition to, the volume entitled 'Lyrical Ballads', they raised a hue and cry, following it up by detailed criticism objectionable alike for its want of temper, discrimination, or feeling. In his interesting 'Biography', Mr. E. P. Hood gives it as his opinion that Wordsworth's popularity was kept back a quarter of a century by the unscrupulous attacks of the Edinburgh Review, and he wittily compares Jeffrey to a bookish Bluebeard pouncing upon these poems and delighting to mangle them in his closet.

They were not, however, always tenderly treated by those from whom a friendly reception might have been anticipated: 'Blackwood' and the 'Quarterly' could, on occasion, sneer or damn with faint praise, and it has been justly remarked that the tardy commendations which appeared in 'Blackwood' are referable quite as much to the political partizanship and private friendship of Professor Wilson, as to the love of nature and superior poetic taste with which he was credited.

Some of the poet's most manifest absurdities fell under these attacks, and were withdrawn, but others were retained and, to the regret of his more judicious admirers, are still allowed a place in his recognized works.

There is a well-known saying, that while an author is still living, we estimate his powers by his worst performance, and when he is dead, we rate him by his best.

Whatever strictures may be fairly made on some of his minor poems, no one can fail to sympathize with the kindly feelings which prompted the poet when writing them, and which are further developed in a letter addressed to Charles James Fox, in which he says, 'You have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor. The two poems which I have mentioned were written with a view to shew that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. The poems are faithful copies from nature; and I hope whatever effect they may have upon you, you will at least be able to perceive that they may excite profitable sympathies in many kind and good hearts, and may, in some small degree, enlarge our feelings of reverence for our species and our knowledge of human nature, by shewing that our best qualities are possessed by men whom we are too apt to consider,

not with reference to the points in which they resemble us, but to those in which they manifestly differ from us'.

The reputation of men of genius may, for a time, suffer as much from injudicious partizanship as from malicious opposition; and Wordsworth found some readers of the idolatrous class ready to hold up to special admiration the most faulty of his poems: in the same manner as a noted writer on art has been heard rapturously to extol every passing whim and random touch of that wonderful landscape painter, Turner. Between this artist and Wordsworth, some critics have noted a resemblance in the contempt with which many affect to mention him, and in the mist that seems, and only seems, to hover over the canvas, and in the clear, well-defined shapes that speedily grow from the canvas to the eye. Hazlitt goes further than this, and his remarks on the 'Excursion' would imply that a pervading obscurity besets that poem, and that his descriptions of natural scenery are not brought home distinctly to the eye by forms and circumstances. —'An intense intellectual egotism swallows up every thing'—'Every object is seen through the medium of innumerable recollections, and clothed with the haze of imagination, like a glittering vapour. The image is lost in sentiment, as sound in the multiplication of echoes'.

From the absence of warmth or passion in his poems, others have compared Wordsworth to a sculptor. Southey, with genial candour, proclaims that it is by the side of Milton that he will have his station awarded by posterity; and who is there that, remembering the pure life of Wordsworth, and opening his soul to the nobler utterances of his genius, but

must feel that he had many affinities with whatever is beautiful and true in colour and in form, as well as truthful in aspiration and lofty in conception?

But to pass on to some of the leading events connected with the life of our author.

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, in Cumberland, on April 7, 1770, the second son of John Wordsworth, law agent to Sir James Lowther, afterwards Earl of Lonsdale. His mother was Anne, only daughter of Wm. Cookson, mercer, of Penrith. The house in which the poet first saw the light still attracts the attention of the traveller as he enters Cockermouth by the Whitehaven road, from its antiquated style of architecture, its many-windowed front, and a general air of superiority to those in its immediate neighbourhood. The early years of his life were spent partly at Cockermouth and partly with his mother's relations at Penrith, where she died in 1778.

Losing his mother at so early an age, his recollections concerning her appear but scanty. The absurd practice of doing penance was not extinct at the period of his childhood, and on an occasion of this sort, stimulated by curiosity to see the woman in a white sheet, and by the hope of obtaining a penny, he repaired to the church on a week day. On his informing his mother where he had been, she commended him, but withdrew her praise when his acknowledged disappointment at not receiving the expected largess revealed his motive for going.

To an intimate friend, his mother stated, that of her five children, William was the only one about whose future life she felt anxious, adding, that he would be remarkable for good, or for evil, being led to this remark from observation of his moody and violent tem-

per, of which the following instances are given in his autobiographical memoranda.

'I remember', says he, 'going once into the attics of my grandfather's house, upon some indignity being put upon me, with an intention of destroying myself with one of the foils which were kept there. I took the foil in hand, but my heart failed'. On another occasion when whipping their tops on the boarded floor of the large drawing-room, the walls of which were hung round with family portraits, he dared his elder brother to dash his whip through one of them: his brother declining the feat: 'Then', said he, 'here goes', and he struck his lash through the hooped petticoat of one of the ancestral dames.

The virtuous and contemplative Boyle, after relating an incident connected with his childhood, adds, 'This trivial passage I have mentioned now, not that I think that in itself it deserves narration, but because as the sun is seen best at his rising and his setting, so men's native dispositions are clearliest perceived whilst they are children, and when they are dying. These little sudden actions are the greatest discoverers of men's true humours'. If these remarks be just, how completely does the sedate, contemplative, and peaceful life of Wordsworth prove the mastery he obtained over his naturally impetuous temperament.

Shortly after the death of their mother, William and his elder brother, Richard, were sent to the grammar-school at Hawkshead, a spot then much more secluded than now, and a situation highly favourable to the cultivation of a reflective and poetic mind. There his days passed happily, he enjoyed much liberty, roaming freely about that favoured region — the centre of so much beautiful scenery,— and reading such books as

he chose. Among his boyish treasures, he makes mention of a little canvas-covered book, a meagre abstract of the Arabian Nights. Learning from his new companions that there were four volumes full of these wonderful tales, he and a favourite playmate made a vow that they would lay aside what money they possessed and save more, until a sufficient fortune was amassed to purchase so great a treasure. For several months they persevered, but alas, for the weakness of the flesh! In Hawkshead market place, near where the assembly room now flourishes, a grey boulder reared its huge round head: it was known far and near as Nanny-Holme Stone, that being the name of an ancient dame, privileged to set up a stall of dainties under its shelter. With such temptation daily in view, can we wonder that the firmness of the embryo poet and his comrade failed?—A little later on, however, he read, with keen relish, the works of Fielding and Swift, and revelled in Don Quixote and Gil Blas.

Though joining in the boyish pastimes of his school companions, yet at that early period we find him a student of nature, mingling with his sports much of that thoughtful introspection which foreshadowed the after character of the man; and it is remarkable that one of his finest poems, the Ode on the 'Intimations of Immortality in Childhood', which was composed during his residence at Town End, Grasmere, records his feelings and experiences during that period; and he has left it on record, that in early youth he could not believe that he should lie quietly in the grave, and that his body would moulder into dust.

'But', he adds, 'it was not so much from the source of animal vivacity that my difficulty came, as from a

sense of the indomitableness of the spirit within me. I used to brood over the stories of Enoch and Elijah, and almost to persuade myself that, whatever became of others, I should be translated in something of the same way to heaven. With a feeling congenial to this, I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality — to that dream-like vividness and splendour which invest objects of sight in childhood, every one, I believe, if he would look back, could bear testimony, and I need not dwell upon it here; but having in the poem regarded it as presumptive evidence of a prior state of existence, I think it right to protest against a conclusion which has given pain to some good and pious persons, that I meant to inculcate such a belief. It is far too shadowy a notion to be recommended to faith as more than an element in our instincts of immortality. But let us bear in mind that, though the idea is not advanced in revelation, there is nothing there to contradict it'.

The first verses which he wrote were a task imposed by his master, the subject, 'The Summer Vacation'. When about fifteen, he was called upon, among other scholars, to write verses upon the completion of the second centenary of the foundation of the school in 1585, by Archbishop Sandys. These lines were much admired, far more, says Wordsworth, than they deserved, for they were but a tame imitation of Pope's versification. Incited by these exercises to composition of a more voluntary kind, he wrote a long poem on his own adventures amid the scenery of the country

where he was brought up: the conclusion appears among his collected Poems; it commences, 'Dear native regions'.

In the year 1783, on his return home for the vacation, he lost his father, who had for some time been in a declining state. The family, thus early bereft of parental guidance, consisted of four sons and one daughter. Their worldly prospects were unpromising. A large sum owing to their father as law agent to Sir James Lowther, was withheld by that eccentric and arbitrary man, who, if he were sane, merited the title generally bestowed on him of the 'bad Lord Lonsdale'. His successor, in a prompt and liberal manner, discharged the debt, and sought every opportunity of promoting the interests of the family so long deprived of their due. Richard and William Wordsworth were, at their father's decease, placed under the care of their two uncles, and in the year 1787, William was sent by them to the University of Cambridge, where he entered St. John's College. Great must have been the change to a youth scarcely eighteen, whose days had hitherto been spent in a kind of rustic seclusion among the rocky mountains of the north, to find himself removed to a 'paved world', hemmed in by lofty quadrangles; and how tame and uninteresting must the scenery around Cambridge have appeared to one accustomed to roam the hills.

Southey, who was not a born mountaineer, writing from somewhere in Norfolk, says, 'This part of England looks as if Nature had wearied herself with adorning the rest with hill and dale, and squatted down here to rest'. Not more complimentary to the classic scenery of Cambridge, was Robert Hall, who, when passing over King's College Bridge, and for the first

time seeing the Cam — that 'sweetly flowing stream' of the last prize poem — could not help exclaiming, 'why the stream is standing still to see people drown themselves'. At another time, when indulging in the same strain, he remarked, 'beyond the college precincts there is not a tree for a man to hang himself upon when he is weary of the barrenness of the place'. A gentleman present reminded him that there were some trees in the way to Grantchester, a village about two miles from Cambridge. Mr. Hall replied, 'Yes, Sir, I recollect; willows, I believe, Sir; Nature hanging out signals of distress'.

To the young student, however, the novelty and bustle of the scene, and the self-importance of being a Cambridge 'man', for a while interested and pleased him. In the 'Prelude' he alludes to this period as a fresh day

> 'Of pride and pleasure! to myself I seemed
> A man of business and expense, and went
> From shop to shop about my own affairs,
> To Tutor or to Tailor, as befel,
> From street to street with loose and careless mind'.

Taking his cue from this and following passages of the poem, De Quincey writes, 'It will excite some astonishment when I mention that, on coming to Cambridge, Wordsworth actually assumed the beau, or, in modern slang, the 'dandy'. 'He dressed in silk stockings; had his hair powdered; and in all things plumed himself on his gentlemanly habits. To those who remember the slovenly dress of his middle and philosophic life, this will furnish matter for a smile'.

Much to the disappointment of his friends, Wordsworth made no effort to distinguish himself at College.

His previous training had not prepared him to submit to restraint and discipline, nor had it qualified him to enter into competition with those who had received their early culture at either of our more noted public schools. Unfortunately, too, he saw little worthy of reverence or esteem in the men then in authority at Cambridge. And as to the system pursued there, the reader will find in the 'Prelude' a discriminating, yet resolute, exposure of the hollowness and deadness of our English University training at the period of his youth, but little altered to that of his age.

Although Cambridge contributed so little towards inspiring Wordsworth's muse, it has been noticed by a Professor in Yale College, that this University has produced all the great poets, and Oxford none. 'Milton were glory enough, but Spenser, Gray, Byron, Wordsworth, Tennyson, may be thrown in'. It might be said of Cambridge, as Dr. Johnson said of Pembroke College, 'We are a nest of singing birds here'.

Persuading himself that he was not for that hour, nor for that place, he took no interest in the lecture-room and general routine of college labour, but pursued a course of independent study, reading, in a desultory manner, the literature of his own country; he also made some proficiency in French and Italian, and we learn from his published reminiscences that he had mastered the first six books of Euclid when a schoolboy. The college examinations were then of such a mere nominal character that he was enabled to take his degree of B.A. in regular course, though he gave up the previous week to the reading of Clarissa Harlowe. With so little that was congenial to his nature in collegiate life, it is not surprising that his muse should have been silent, or nearly so, during that

period: yet the poet's soul was with him, he had a world of his own which he created around him.

> 'To every natural form, rock, fruit, or flower,
> Even the loose stones that cover the high-way,
> I gave a moral life: I saw them feel,
> Or linked them to some feeling: the great mass
> Lay bedded in a quickening soul, and all
> That I beheld respired with inward meaning'.

The reader will not be surprised to learn that his companions attributed it to madness when he betrayed these feelings or emotions by looks or gestures.

Reviewing his position at this time, and considering how little he could have benefited by home influences, —his friends moreover, in some degree, estranged by his opposition to their wishes,— no one at hand to sympathize with his peculiarities, and being himself devoid of any high or settled purpose,— we must admire that strength of principle and innate goodness which enabled a youth, of eager and impetuous temperament, to pass unscathed through this trying season, so that he could report of himself,

> 'Happy is the gownèd youth,
> Who only misses what I missed, who falls
> No lower than I fell'.

And certainly he was entitled to write thus, the list of whose faults could be summed up by the mention of a lax performance of routine college duties in which he took no interest; and in once overstepping the bounds of moderation in the use of wine. And strange to tell, the occasion of this excess was in celebration of his first visit to the rooms at Christ Church, once occupied by Milton. 'Intoxication' adds De Quincey, 'by way of homage to the most temperate of men;

and this homage offered by one who has turned out to the full as temperate. Besides which I have heard from his own lips that he was not too far gone to attend chapel decorously during the very acme of his elevation'.

With each recurring vacation we find him indulging his favourite passion of rambling. The hills and mountains were to him not mere places where to breathe a purer atmosphere and invigorate the frame, but he viewed these misty heights as regions in which the earth itself seems going up into heaven with adoration, and the excitement he experienced from natural emotion ripened into devotional thoughts and religious aspirations.

In the year 1790, in companionship with Robert Jones, a fellow collegian, he started, with very scanty provision, on a pedestrian tour on the continent, to use his own words, 'we went staff in hand, without knapsack and carrying each his needments tied up in our pocket handkerchiefs, with about twenty pounds a-piece in our pockets.

After taking his degree in 1791, he went in the autumn of that year to Paris, and thence to Orleans, for the sake of retirement and perfecting himself in the language. In various parts of France he spent a full year, and that year the terrific one when the moral tempest of the Revolution raged most fiercely. He returned to England before the execution of the king, and remained for a year or more in London, overwhelmed with shame and despondency for the disgrace and scandal brought upon Liberty, by the atrocities committed in that holy name. As he gives us but a slender intimation of his personal doings while moving among the Revolutionists, it is not easy to determine

whether he would have incurred much personal risk by remaining longer. Having picked up a stone to be treasured as a relic from the site of the demolished Bastile, he confesses that this sentimental interest was affected and not genuine.

In the 'Prelude' a passage occurs in which, after speaking of himself as an obscure and insignificant stranger in France, 'little graced with eloquence even in his native tongue', he further writes,

> 'Yet would I at this time with willing heart
> Have undertaken for a cause so great
> Service however dangerous. I revolved,
> How much the destiny of Man had still
> Hung upon single persons'.

Lockhart, seizing his opportunity as a critic, thus unfairly endeavours to hold the young and ardent republican up to ridicule.

'He revolved in his mind how the crisis might be averted, and taking the measure of himself and of the various factions, he came to the conclusion that he, William Wordsworth, was the proper person to rally the nation, and to conduct the Revolution to a happy issue'.

When we observe that French politics at this day possess for all thoughtful observers a most absorbing interest, and that the principles and objects of the great movement to which we have referred were not merely of local application but appealed to the sympathies and interests of every people then groaning under the bondage of inequality, oppression, and injustice, can we wonder that young and ardent men like Wordsworth and his associates yielded to the spell? The eloquent words recently addressed to an Edinburgh

audience by M. Provost Paradol, express also the feelings which animated all honest men who had faith in the French Revolution: — 'For myself I am rather inclined to consider the truly enlightened part of each people as a portion of a certain noble nation without a name, whose citizens, not united by blood, but united by spirit, are scattered all over the earth, with the duty of feeling always for each other, and of helping each other for good'. How far the poet sympathized with the ultra-reformers of the day, he confesses in these lines:

> 'I rejoiced,
> Yea, afterwards, — truth most painful to record! —
> Exulted, in the triumph of my soul,
> When Englishmen by thousands were o'erthrown'.

And in the like strain he adds, that when prayers or praises were offered up for our country's victories, he, like an uninvited guest, sate silent and his imagination

> 'Fed on the day of vengeance yet to come'.

He, and thousands of aspiring minds at that period, believed that the triumph of France would inaugurate a new era of virtue, justice, and truth. How grievously they were disenchanted, history records, and possibly to the fierce revulsion excited by the turn of events, we may trace the beginning of that defection from the cause of Freedom, which at a later period, led such men as Wordsworth, Southey, and Coleridge, to rank themselves in opposition to measures favourable to civil and religious liberty. But how frequently does the violent republicanism of youth end in the violent toryism of age? 'Does not the pendulum, very violently set in motion, swing as far one way as it has swung

the other? Does not the sun rise in the east and set in the west?'

Let us hear however his own explanation of this desertion of his former opinions. 'I should think that I had lived to little purpose if my notions on the subject of government had undergone no modifications. My youth must in that case have been without enthusiam, and my manhood endued with small capability of profiting by reflection.

If I were addressing those who have dealt so liberally with the words renegade, apostate, &c., I should retort the charge upon them, and say, *you* have been deluded by *places* and *persons* while I have stuck to *principles*'.

Referring to this question, the Rev. F. W. Robertson, in the course of one of his lectures, says, 'It may appear to many persons a desperate thing to defend Wordsworth's consistency in the very teeth of facts: for it is unquestionable that in his early life Wordsworth was a republican, and sympathized with the French Revolution, and that in his later life he wrote lines of stern condemnation for its excesses.

It is unquestionable, moreover, that in early life, Wordsworth rebelled against anything like ecclesiastical discipline, that he could not even hear the morning and evening prayers at chapel, and yet that in later life he wrote a large number of 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets'. After quoting the 'sonnet to Archbishop Laud' with the poet's note in defence of it, the lecturer continues, 'So that Wordsworth began as a republican and ended as a tory: he began in defiance of every thing ecclesiastical, and ended as a high churchman. This change has been viewed by persons of different parties with different sentiments. To some, as to the poet Shelley,

it appeared as an apostacy from the purity of his earlier principles; to others, as if the sacredness of his earlier principles had been ripened with the mellowed strength of manly life. Among these last is his biographer, Dr. Wordsworth; and it is curious to see what pains he has taken to point out some passage by which the evil of another might be modified — aiming at one great and chief object, to prove that Wordsworth died a Tory and a High Churchman. Be it so: I am prepared to say that the inner life of Wordsworth was consistent'.

Every candid enquirer will, we think, concur in this decision. And especially after a careful perusal of the Prelude, he will find as Robertson points out, that though in early life Wordsworth was a democrat; an admirer of the French Revolution; and sympathized deeply and manfully with the cause of the poor, and loved them and desired their elevation, yet he sympathized with them as the stately nobles of nature, seeing in them, not what they were, but what they might be. And in all Wordsworth's pedlars, gipsies, and wanderers, we have not bad men, defiled by crime, but there is speaking through them all, his own high, pure mind. He simply exhibited his own humanity, which he felt to be in them also.

We shall not enter into any discussion as to Wordsworth's religious views. In answer to those who regret that he did not in his writings treat of distinguishing and peculiar doctrines, let it suffice to quote a passage from one of his private letters. 'For my own part I have been averse to frequent mention of the mysteries of Christian faith, not from a want of a due sense of their momentous nature, but the contrary. I felt it far too deeply to venture on handling the subject as fa-

miliarly as many scruple not to do: I am far from blaming them, but let them not blame me, nor turn from my companionship on that account.

'Besides general reasons for diffidence in treating subjects of Holy Writ, I have some especial ones; I might err in points of faith, but I should not deem my mistakes less to be deprecated because they were expressed in metre. Even Milton, in my humble judgement, has erred, and grievously; and what poet could hope to atone for his misapprehensions in the way that mighty mind has done'?

Mr. Hallam in his 'History of Literature', remarks that 'a religious epic labours under some disadvantages: in proportion as it attracts those who hold the same tenets with the author, it is regarded by those who dissent from him, with indifference or aversion. It is said that the discovery of Milton's Arianism, in this rigid generation, has already impaired the sale of "Paradise Lost"'.

Wordsworth was undoubtedly a zealous defender of the Establishment, especially in his latter days; at every period of his life theoretically within her fold: at one time dedicating his inspiration to her history. Yet there is no poet so unquestionably religious as Wordsworth, whose devout Theism is so little overlaid with the incrustation of orthodoxy. An eminently good and devout man, he centred his soul wholly on the duties of practical religion, and looked on the Church of England chiefly with a poetical eye. And poetry finds in doctrine a very unpracticable material. The simple village churches of Westmorland,—the patriarchal character so admirably sustained by many a pastor, so affectionately recognized by many a flock—the homely piety and cordial unity of the parish, undis-

turbed by the fanaticism or the divisions of Dissent — the touching solemnity of traditionary usages observed by generation after generation — and in a wider field the spiritual triumphs and temporal reverses of the Church of England — the courage, the steadfastness, the piety, and the learning, which adorn her history — these are the subjects which warmed the poet's imagination and dictated his verse; and in that verse, so far removed from any self-glorification of a sect, every catholic-minded christian can delight.

In 1793 he published his poem entitled 'Descriptive Sketches', the materials for which he gathered during his tour in 1790. With it appeared the 'Evening Walk', written in 1787–88–89, and addressed to his sister. These poems were little noticed by the public, but they arrested the attention of Coleridge, who thus speaks of them in his 'Biographia Literaria.' 'During the last year of my residence at Cambridge, I became acquainted with Mr. Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches', and seldom, if ever, was the emergence of an original poetic genius above the literary horizon more evidently announced'.

It has been a favourite theme for speculation, what might have been the mutual result, if Coleridge and Wordsworth had been fellow students at Cambridge. That the stimulus imparted to each other would have been greatly beneficial there can be no doubt: as it was, Coleridge, the 'poetic philosopher', entered on his career at college just as Wordsworth, the 'philosophic poet', was leaving.

Wordsworth and his sister had seldom met since the dispersion of the family at their father's death, but in 1794 they were restored to each other's society: she became his constant companion, and he has made re-

peated and grateful mention of the influence she exercised over him both morally and intellectually; indeed its effects are traceable through most of his after life.

In the autumn of the year 1795, they found their first home in Dorset, at Racedown Lodge, near Crewkerne, a spot so retired as at that time to have had a post only once a week. Here was composed his little-read tragedy of 'The Borderers', which was offered to the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, but was, as the author admits, judiciously rejected. A competent critic has characterized this piece as repulsive in the development of both story and plot, having been composed in that feverish state of mind produced by the French Revolution. It may therefore be noted as a proof of the complacency with which Wordsworth regarded his own productions, that some fifty years afterwards he should have published it. Though, perhaps, we shall cease to wonder at this persistency when we call to mind how, in all ages, authors have clung to their worst productions, as mothers have done to their most ill-favoured bantlings. Is it not matter of history that Heliodorus, the African bishop, thought so well of his 'Æthiopica', which has been denounced as having no claim to attention either by right of its Christianity or its poetry, that, when commanded, under ecclesiastical censure, to burn his romance or give up his bishopric, he chose the latter alternative.

After a stay of about two years at Racedown, the Wordsworths took a house at Alfoxden, a village near Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire, not far from Bristol, and near the Quantock Hills. This place was doubly attractive to them, as presenting the most entrancing scenery and bringing them near to their friend Coleridge.

To this sequestered region the famous political orator, John Thelwall, retired, seeking refuge from further persecution, after his trial for high treason. As Coleridge had also been a public lecturer, the claim of Thelwall to acquaintanceship was admitted on that plea, and Wordsworth frequently met him there, and speaks of him as a man of extraordinary talent, an affectionate husband, and a good father devoting himself to the education of his children. His sensibility to the beauty of natural objects also obtained for him an increase of regard from the poet, who mentions that on a day when they were all enjoying a lovely scene on the bank of the stream which flows down the beautiful glen of Alfoxden, Coleridge exclaimed, 'This is a place to reconcile one to all the jarrings and conflicts of the wide world'; 'Nay', said Thelwall, 'to make one forget them altogether'.

The retreat of Thelwall, however, led the suspicious and tyrannical government of the day to send a spy to watch the proceedings of these arch-conspirators: the ramblings and consultations of Thelwall, Coleridge, Wordsworth, and sometimes Southey, being presumed to have some deep political meaning.

The wiseacres in power were rivalled by the clodpoles of the village, who singled out Wordsworth as the object of their most lively suspicion. Had they not seen him constantly roaming the country, or wandering over the hills at night, looking with strange earnestness at the moon? Another had heard him mutter to himself in an outlandish gibberish which no one could understand: he must, they concluded, be a wise-man, *videlicet* (conjurer). But the most knowing of them said, 'You are every one of you wrong; I know what he is; we have all seen him tramping away towards

the sea: depend on't, he carries on a snug business in the smuggling line'. But, perhaps, the most notable conclusion arrived at was that 'he must surely be a desperd French Jacobin, for *he is so silent and dark that nobody ever heard un say a word abaut politics*'.

Ridiculous as all this appears, yet the consequence was that the tenant of the Alfoxden estate could not be prevailed on to let him the house after their first agreement had transpired. We are reminded by these absurd sayings and doings of the zealous informer who accused Beaumont and Fletcher of treasonable designs, because, while concerting the plan of a tragedy, one of them was overheard to say, 'I'll kill the King'.

It is alarming to contemplate what might have been the result to Southey and Wordsworth, had one of the conversations of their early Republican days taken place in the presence of one less friendly than De Quincey, who reports having heard opinions avowed most hostile to the reigning family. 'It had been agreed that no good was to be hoped for, as respected England, until the royal family should be expatriated; and Southey, jestingly, considering to what country they should be exiled, with mutual benefit for that country and themselves, had supposed the case that with a large allowance of money, such as might stimulate the industry of a rising colony, they should be transported to New South Wales; which project amusing his fancy he improvised about eight or ten lines, of which the three last I perfectly remember.

> 'Therefore, old George, our king, we pray
> Of thee forthwith to extend thy sway
> Over the great Botanic Bay.''

Cottle relates an incident, which, however trying and

disastrous at the time, did not lead to any such after annoyance. His account is as follows: 'Soon after our acquaintance commenced, Mr. Wordsworth happened to be in Bristol, and asked me to spend a day or two with him at Alfoxden. I consented and drove him down in a gig. We called for Mr. Coleridge, Miss Wordsworth, and the servant, at Stowey, and they walked, while we rode, to Mr. Wordsworth's house, distant two or three miles, where we purposed to dine. A London alderman would smile at our bill of fare. It consisted of a bottle of brandy, a noble loaf, and a stout piece of cheese: and as there were plenty of lettuces in the garden, with all these comforts we calculated on doing very well. Our fond hopes, however, were somewhat damped by finding that our stout piece of cheese had vanished! A sturdy *rat* of a beggar, whom we had relieved on the road, with his olfactories all alive, no doubt *smelt* our cheese, and while we were gazing at the magnificent clouds, contrived to abstract our treasure! Cruel tramp! an ill return for our pence. We both wished the rind might not choke him. The mournful fact was ascertained a little before we drove into the court-yard of the house. Mr. Coleridge bore the loss with great fortitude, observing that he should never starve with a loaf of bread and a bottle of brandy. He, now, with the dexterity of an adept, unbuckled the horse, and putting down the shafts with a jerk, as a triumphant conclusion of his work—lo! the bottle of brandy that had been placed most carefully behind us on the seat, suddenly rolled down, and pitching right on the stones, was dashed to pieces. We all beheld the spectacle silent and petrified.

'One little untoward thing often follows another, and while the rest stood musing, chained to the place, re-

galing themselves with the cognac effluvium, and all miserably chagrined, I led the horse to the stable, where a fresh perplexity arose. I removed the harness without difficulty, but after many strenuous attempts I could not get off the collar. In despair, I called for assistance, when aid soon drew near. Mr. Wordsworth first brought his ingenuity into exercise, but after several unsuccessful efforts, he relinquished the achievement as altogether impracticable. Mr. Coleridge now tried his hand, but shewed no more grooming-skill than his predecessors, for after twisting the poor horse's neck almost to strangulation, and to the great danger of his eyes, he gave up the useless task, pronouncing that the horse's head must have grown — gout or dropsy! — since the collar was put on! "for", said he, "it is a downright impossibility for such a huge os frontis to pass through so narrow a collar". Just at this instant the servant girl came near, and understanding the cause of our consternation, "la, master", said she, "you do not go about the work in the right way. You should do like this", when turning the collar completely upside down, she slipped it off in a moment, to our great humiliation and wonderment; each satisfied afresh, that there were heights of knowledge in the world to which he had not attained.

'We were now summoned to dinner, and a dinner it was, such as every blind and starving man in the three kingdoms would have rejoiced to behold. At the top of the table stood a superb brown loaf; the centre dish presented a pile of true cos lettuces; and at the bottom appeared an empty plate, where the stout piece of cheese ought to have stood! Cruel mendicant! and though the brandy was clean gone, yet its place was well, if not better, supplied by a superabundance of

fine sparkling Castalian champagne! A happy thought at this time started into one of our minds, that some sauce would render the lettuces a little more acceptable, when an individual in the company recollected a question once propounded by the most patient of men — "How can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt"?— and asked for a little of that valuable culinary article: "Indeed, Sir", said Betty, "I quite forgot to buy salt". A general laugh followed the announcement, in which our host heartily joined,— this was nothing — we had plenty of other good things; and while crunching our succulents, and munching our crusts, we pitied the far worse condition of those, perchance as hungry as ourselves, who were forced to dine alone, off either. For our next meal, the mile-off village furnished all that could be desired; and these trifling incidents present the sum and the result of half the little passing disasters of life'.

Miss Wordsworth has left some very pleasing and vivid descriptions of their friend Coleridge, and he, writing to Cottle, thus speaks of her. 'Wordsworth and his exquisite sister are with me: she is a woman indeed, in mind — I mean in heart; for her person is such that if you expected to see a pretty woman, you would think her ordinary: if you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty, but her manners are simple, ardent, impressive. In every motion her innocent soul outbeams so brightly, that who saw her would say, "Guilt was a thing impossible with her". Her information various; her eye watchful in minutest observation of Nature; and her taste a perfect electrometer'. A doubt has been entertained by some admirers of Wordsworth, whether the influence of his sister was so unmixed a benefit to his genius as

might at first sight appear, and the question has been raised whether the constant outlook which she kept for objects on which he might exercise his poetic tendencies did not, in fact, check a spirit of enlarged generalization, and lead him to expend his energies too much on occasional and detached poems. The question is not easy of solution, but the number is small, we suspect, of those who would willingly sacrifice some of his best minor poems and sonnets, though the thoughts and felicities of expression they contain should be embodied in an extension by some two or three thousand lines of the 'Excursion', an intention which he is said to have entertained. One unquestionable service however, she rendered, by acting as amanuensis to her brother: his dislike to the use of the pen is well known. In 1803, he thus writes to Sir Geo. Beaumont, 'I do not know from what cause it is, but during the last three years I have never had a pen in my hand for five minutes, before my whole frame becomes one bundle of uneasiness; a perspiration starts out all over me, and my chest is oppressed in a manner which I cannot describe'.

This was written to excuse a very notable instance of this repugnance to the act of writing, namely, that he had allowed eight weeks to elapse before acknowledging the receipt of the title deeds of a plot of ground and cottages, beautifully situated at Applethwaite, near Keswick, which Sir Geo. Beaumont had presented to him, and which munificence was one only of a series of delicate attentions which Wordsworth experienced from this accomplished gentleman and his amiable lady.

The period to which we now refer was a critical one for our author; his fortunes were at a low ebb, and he

became much perplexed as to his plans for the future. He still found himself unable to comply with the wishes of his friends who desired to see him in holy orders, feeling that his mind was not disciplined enough for that sacred office, and that the struggle between his conscience and his impulse would have made life a torture. He also shrank from the law, but singularly enough fancied that he had talents for command, and having studied military history and the strategy of war with great interest, he at one time thought of a military life, but the want of interest and connexions deterred him. Among other neglected schemes, we find those of writing for a London newspaper, the conducting of a monthly miscellany, and school keeping. He would probably have entered into an engagement with the daily press, a task for which he was singularly unfitted, but the negociation was delayed by the tender care he felt it his duty to bestow upon his friend, Raisley Calvert, whose health was rapidly failing. This friend dying shortly after, it was found, on opening his will, that he had bequeathed to the companion of his dying hours, the sum of nine hundred pounds. This opportune legacy, which has been happily described as 'saving our author from the dangerous mountain-pass of poverty', gave him leisure to deliberate as to his future course,— meanwhile every aspiration of his soul inclining him towards a literary and poetic career.

Towards the close of the year 1798, the 'Lyrical Ballads' were published at Bristol, where Wordsworth and his sister resided for a short time, that he might be nearer the printer and publisher, Cottle. Mr. Wordsworth received thirty guineas for his share of the copyright. The first edition consisted of five hundred copies, of a small duodecimo of two hundred and ten

pages. The opening poem was 'The Rime of the Ancyent Marinere', by Coleridge, who, in his 'Biographia Literaria', gives the following interesting particulars of the origin of the volume. 'During the first years that Mr. Wordsworth and I were neighbours, our conversations turned frequently on the two cardinal points of poetry, the power of exciting the sympathy of the reader by a faithful adherence to the truth of nature, and the power of giving the interest of novelty by the modifying colours of imagination. The thought suggested itself that a series of poems might be composed of two sorts. In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part, supernatural; and the excellence aimed at was to consist in the interesting of the affections by the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations, supposing them real.— In the second class, subjects were to be chosen from ordinary life: the characters and incidents were to be such as will be found in every village and its vicinity where there is a meditative and feeling mind to seek after them, or to notice them when they present themselves.

'In this idea originated the plan of the "Lyrical Ballads", in which it was agreed that my endeavours should be directed to persons and characters supernatural, or at least romantic; yet so as to transfer from our inward nature a human interest and a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith. Mr. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was to propose to himself as his object, to give the charm of novelty to things of every day, and to excite a feeling analogous to the supernatural, by awakening the mind's attention to the

lethargy of custom, and directing it to the loveliness and the wonders of the world before us; an inexhaustible treasure, but for which, in consequence of the film of familiarity and selfish solicitude, we have eyes, yet see not, ears that hear not, and hearts that neither feel nor understand.

'With this view I wrote the "Ancient Mariner", and was preparing, among other poems, "The Dark Ladie" and the "Christabel", in which I should have more nearly realised my ideal than I had done in my first attempt. But Mr. Wordsworth's industry had proved so much more successful, and the number of his poems so much greater, that my compositions, instead of forming a balance, appeared rather an interpolation of heterogeneous matter. Mr. Wordsworth added two or three poems written in his own character, in the impassioned, lofty, and sustained diction, which is characteristic of his genius. In this form the "Lyrical Ballads" were published, and were presented by him as an experiment, whether subjects which from their nature rejected the usual ornaments and extra-colloquial style of poems in general, might not be so managed in the language of ordinary life, as to produce the pleasurable interest which it is the peculiar business of poetry to impart.

'To the second edition he added a preface of considerable length, in which, notwithstanding some passages of apparently a contrary import, he was understood to contend for the extension of this style to poetry of all kinds, and to reject, as vicious and indefensible, all phrases and forms of speech that were not included in what he (unfortunately, I think, adopting an equivocal expression), called the language of real life. From this preface, prefixed to poems in which it was impos-

sible to deny the presence of original genius, however mistaken its direction might be deemed, arose the whole long continued controversy. For, from the conjunction of perceived power with supposed heresy, I explain the inveteracy and, in some instances, I grieve to say, the acrimonious passions, with which the controversy has been conducted by the assailants'.

The account which Wordsworth gives of the origin of the 'Ancient Mariner' is this, that in the autumn of 1797 he, with his sister and Coleridge, started from Alfoxden, to visit Linton and the Valley of Stones, and their united funds being very small, they agreed to defray the expense of the tour by writing a poem, to be sent to the New Monthly Magazine. Accordingly, as they proceeded along the Quantock Hills, by Watchet, the poem of the 'Ancient Mariner' was planned. It was founded, as Mr. Coleridge said, on a dream narrated by a friend of his. Much the greater part of the story was Coleridge's invention, but parts were suggested by Wordsworth, for example, that some crime was to be committed which should bring upon the 'old navigator', as Coleridge delighted to call him, the spectral persecution, as a consequence of that crime and his own wanderings.

After giving sundry details as to the further elaboration of the poem, Wordsworth adds that the 'Ancient Mariner' grew and grew till it became too important for its first object, which was limited to their expectation of five pounds, and they began to think of a volume which was to consist of poems on supernatural subjects, taken from common life, but looked at through an imaginative medium.

Wordsworth afterwards regretted that he had taken Coleridge's advice as to the title of 'Lyrical Ballads',

the two terms being incongruous — Lyre and Ballad belonging to different ages and different people.

In the month of September, 1798, Wordsworth, accompanied by his sister and Coleridge, proceeded to Germany. At Hamburgh, Wordsworth spent an afternoon with his brother poet Klopstock, then a venerable old man, but retaining much of the vivacity of youth. Notes of their conversation, taken at the time, have appeared in Coleridge's publication—'The Friend', as well as in his 'Biographia Literaria'. One passage may be quoted as characteristic of Wordsworth, 'We talked of tragedy. He (Klopstock) seemed to rate highly the power of exciting tears. I said nothing was more easy than to deluge an audience; that it was done every day by the meanest writers'.

Coleridge went from Hamburgh to Ratzeburg, whilst the Wordsworths journeyed by Lunebourg, Brunswick, to the once romantic city of Goslar, which still retains some vestiges of its ancient imperial splendour. Here they settled down for the winter; a trying winter it was, the severest of the century. As Wordsworth was not a smoker (a great deficiency in Germany), nor in a position to give entertainments, the season spent at Goslar was, to him and his sister, a chilling one; but they made some progress in their object of acquiring the German language. Here, under the shade of lofty mountains, as the poet and his companion wandered among the pines of the Hartz forest, or as he paced alone the ramparts of the city, were composed several of his poems—amongst them 'Ruth' and some portion of the 'Prelude', but whatever he wrote had reference to his beloved country, which had become more endeared to him from his temporary absence.

Being now about to enter his thirtieth year, he felt

that the time had arrived when he must determine whether he was justified in choosing the poet's life as a profession. In order, therefore, to test his strength, he resolved to attempt some serious essay, and for subject fixed upon 'The Growth of his own Mind'. He determined to address the poem to Coleridge, on whose sympathy, as a poet and a friend, he could rely.

Though commenced immediately on quitting Goslar, in 1799, it was not till nearly six years after that the 'Prelude' was completed. It is a curious fact that Southey had, in early life, often contemplated writing the history of his own mind, and had imagined it would prove the most pleasing task he could be engaged in, 'but', says his biographer, 'he probably found that it was more agreeable in anticipation than in reality, and when once the thread was broken, he seems neither to have found time nor inclination to resume it'.

Towards the close of this year, we find Wordsworth established in his first settled home at Grasmere, where, in a small cottage, a little removed from the present high-road, he spent eight happy and industrious years, following a determined course of 'plain living and high thinking'. From a passage in Canto I. of 'The Waggoner', we learn that this cottage flourished, in by-gone days, as a small way-side inn.

> 'There where the Dove and Olive Bough
> Once hung, a poet harbours now,
> A simple water-drinking bard'.

Here, in addition to the constant companionship of his sister, he enjoyed, for a while, the society of his brother John. Coleridge was also a frequent visitor, and it would be difficult to estimate the gain to Wordsworth

of such an appreciating and suggestive companion. As to Coleridge, the poetic fire which sparkled so brightly when they took counsel together at Alfoxden, does not appear to have ever kindled again. His mind must have been ill at ease when he contrasted his own career, which he sadly describes as that of one 'rolling rudderless', with the manly struggles of his brother bards. There was a daily beauty in the life of Southey especially, which must have made his own look ugly.

In the tranquil seclusion of Town-end, time wore on, poems were written, beautiful scenes explored, and characters studied, but so little impression was made on the public mind that the publishers, though liberal men, could only venture to offer £100 for two editions of two volumes of 'Lyrical Ballads', which Wordsworth now proposed to print, containing the addition of thirty-seven new pieces. The number of his admirers was, however, on the increase, and even the 'Edinburgh Review' bore testimony to his growing popularity.

The year 1802 was a busy and eventful season to Wordsworth. His sister's diary describes 'William' as hard at work upon the 'Pedlar', the original title of the 'Excursion'; many minor poems are noticed as in progress; and then a journey to London and a hasty trip to Calais are recorded. These wanderings are so constant that reference to them need only be made when some noteworthy incident occurs, or when they give rise to some poetical effusion which calls for remark.

Later on in life, Wordsworth, contrasting his own love of travel with the desire for studious seclusion which characterised his Keswick neighbour, writes in 1843, 'My lamented friend, Southey, used to say that

had he been born a Papist, the course of life, which in all probability would have been his, was that of a Benedictine monk in a convent, furnished with an inexhaustible library. Books were, in fact, *his passion;* and *wandering*, I can with truth affirm, was *mine;* but this propensity in me was happily counteracted by inability from want of fortune to fulfil my wishes'.

Sir Geo. Beaumont, of whose kind and enduring friendship for our author we shall have to make frequent mention, aware of his roaming propensities, bequeathed him a sum of money towards the expenses of an annual tour.

Another notice in the sister's Diary is significant.—'We walked round the two lakes, Grasmere and Rydal. The sun shone out before we reached Grasmere. We sat by the roadside, at the foot of the lake, close by M's name. William cut it to make it plainer'.

Here we see him haunted and waylaid by thoughts of her whom he describes as a 'Phantom of delight', and are prepared for the entry of a later date. 'On Monday, October 4, 1802, Wordsworth was married at Brompton Church, near Scarborough, to Mary Hutchinson. We arrived at Grasmere, at six in the evening, on October 6, 1802'.

Many of his literary friends, or at least acquaintances, were perplexed to imagine how this marriage was ever brought about, as they could not conceive of Wordsworth as submitting his faculties to the humilities and devotion of courtship. Much of the difficulty, however, disappears when we learn that he and his bride had known each other from childhood, having learned their letters from the same old dame at Penrith, and that Mary Hutchinson and his sister were warm friends.

This important step was further made easy to Words-

worth, by the opportune repayment to his family, by Lord Lowther, of a sum amounting, with principal and interest, to £8500, already mentioned as having been so strangely withheld from them by his predecessor, Lord Lonsdale. Of this sum, £1800 a-piece fell to the poet and his sister. This improved state of affairs, rendering them comparatively affluent.

Returning with his bride to the little nook of mountain-ground, with its

> 'Happy garden, whose seclusion deep
> Had been so friendly to industrious hours'.

Again he enjoyed

> 'Days of sweet leisure, taxed with patient thought,
> Abstruse, nor wanting punctual service high,
> Matins and vespers of harmonious verse'.

Descriptions of scenery for the most part pall upon the ear, but when they relate to some spot remarkable for its intrinsic beauty, or hallowed by some interesting association, we listen to them with pleasure ; no apology, therefore, is required for presenting the reader with a passage from the pen of Dr. Channing, vividly portraying the impression made upon him by the scenery surrounding the poet's retreat.

'Next we visited Grasmere, a sacred spot, a seclusion from all that is turbulent and unholy in life. It was near sunset as we approached this water. We found ourselves descending a mount called Loughrigg, into a valley in which reposed this sweet lake, unruffled, smooth, hemmed in by sheltering mountains. The solemn heights towards the setting sun, shewed to us their dark sides, reflected with wonderful distinct-

ness in the still bosom of the lake, within whose waters they seemed to find a still quieter abode than in the tranquil heavens into which their tops ascended. This repetition of the dark sides of the mountains threw a solemn shade over the part of the lake to which the reflection was confined, whilst beyond this line a mild light, answering to that of the heavens, and of other mountains, gleamed from the water, investing it at one moment with various, but not inharmonious, forms of beauty.

'The effect of this lake on the spirit was immediate, deep, penetrating the inmost soul, and awakening a feeling of something profound in one's own nature. Windermere was tranquil, but it had a cheerful tranquillity. Its genius was peace, but peace with a smiling aspect, wooing society and sympathy. Grasmere appeared to be spread out in the mountain recesses as an abode for lonely, silent, pensive meditation, for the inspired imagination, which in still abstraction from vulgar realities, would give itself up to ideal beauty,—for the spirit of love, which, wearied with man's strifes and passions would meet and commune with a kindred spirit in nature,—for piety to approach God without distraction, to see him in the harmony, to hear him in the silence of his own creation.

'The lake has not left very definite traces of figure, &c. on my mind, for in such a scene the mind is not stimulated to analyse,—the heart and the imagination are too absorbed for curious observation. It is rather circular, and wants the multiplied diversities of outline, the points, bays, and recesses of Windermere; and this perhaps aids the effect, for the eye is not excited to wander in search of beauties half hid in the mazy openings. The soul is free to receive an unmixed im-

pression from the simple harmonious scene. When, it is said, that the surrounding mountains are bold, some precipitous, and one of them a rugged steep seamed with storms and strewed with rocky fragments, it may seem strange that the lake can have the character of mild repose which is ascribed to it; but, spreading as it does in a circle, it so parts the surrounding mountains that they cannot be grouped as if they bordered a narrower stream, and thus they became subordinate accompaniments to, instead of being the chief feature of, the prospect. Then the immediate shore of the lake is level and verdant, and blends singularly with the peaceful water. This is particularly true with respect to the vale, properly so called, which spreads between the head of Grasmere and Helm Crag, whose surface is almost as unbroken as the lake, and which, clothed as it is with the freshest verdure, varied by hedgerows, and combining with its natural beauty the most affecting tokens of humanity by its simple cottages and Gothic church, communicates an inexpressible character of peace and benignity, and of gentle and holy sweetness to the whole scene.'

At the time of Channing's visit, (1822,) Grasmere was much more secluded than now, many houses haveing since sprung up and a large hotel overlooks the lake. How different was the accommodation then afforded to the traveller may be gathered from a letter addressed to his sister, in which he writes:—

'I could not but think of the amusement I should have afforded you, could you have taken a peep at me. I had spent Sunday morning at Grasmere, and in the afternoon being unable to attend church, I resolved to visit Mr. Wordsworth, who resides two miles and a-half from the inn. Unluckily, Grasmere, whilst it supplied

the wants of the imagination and heart most abundantly, could not supply me with any vehicle for the body more easy or dignified than a cart, dragged by a horse who had caught nothing of the grace of the surrounding scene.

'After an interview of great pleasure and interest I set out to return, and unwilling to lose Mr. Wordsworth's company I accepted his proposition that we should walk together until I was fatigued. At the end of half a-mile my strength began to fail, and finding my companion still earnest in conversation I invited him to take a seat with me, which he did, and in this state we re-entered the delightful valley. You perhaps might have promised me the honour of being introduced with the horse and cart into a 'lyrical ballad'; but to me who, as you know, profess to be greatly indebted to Mr. Wordsworth's genius, and whose respect and affection were heightened by personal intercourse, there seemed a peculiar felicity in riding through this scene of surpassing loveliness, with a man of genius and sensibility who had caught inspiration from the lakes and mountains in whose beauty I had been rejoicing'.

Twenty years after this sunset ride, an American traveller was visiting Wordsworth, when the poet incidentally mentioned this interview and said that one remark then made by Dr. Channing had remained fixed in his memory, and all the more deeply from the impressive tone of sincere feeling with which it was uttered. It was to this effect: — 'That one great evidence of the Divine origin of Christianity was, that it contained nothing which rendered it unadapted to a progressive state of society, that it put no checks upon the activity of the human mind, and did not compel it to tread always blindly in a beaten path'.

Among the earliest to recognize the genius of Wordsworth was Sir George Beaumont, a descendant of the celebrated dramatist, Francis Beaumont, a gentleman of refined taste and fond of the society of literary men and artists, whom he assembled around him at his seat at Coleorton, in Leicestershire. In his youth he was acquainted with Richard Wilson, and from that accomplished artist he inbibed a taste for landscape painting, in which he afterwards attained considerable skill. He aided in establishing the National Gallery, and enriched it by the gift of some very valuable pictures. In 1803, during a temporary residence at Greta Hall, he became aware of the friendship of the two poets, and of their mutual wish to live near to each other. Desirous of bringing this about, he purchased a beautiful glen at Applethwaite, near Keswick, and presented it to Wordsworth, (whom he had never seen,) hoping that it might be the site of a residence for him.

Wordsworth's strange procrastination in acknowledging this act of generosity has already been mentioned; but it is only an extreme instance of the dislike which he always shewed to the use of the pen, frequent proofs of which occur throughout his meagre published correspondence; in the course of which we meet with the statement that, except during absence from his family, he had not written five letters of friendship during five years. The facility with which Southey often dispatched fifty or sixty letters, *currente calamo*, as a mere morning prelude to the serious literary work of the day, must have appeared to Wordsworth as little less than miraculous. Great was the labour entailed on his wife and sister when they had to transcribe his scarcely decipherable scrawls. In replying to one of these hieroglyphics, Charles Lamb writes to him:

'Tell Mrs. W. her postscripts are always agreeable: they are so legible too. Your manual-graphy is terrible,—dark as Leucophron. "Likelihood", for instance, is thus typified: [Here Lamb inserted a most inimitable scrawl.] I should not wonder if the constant making out of such paragraphs is the cause of the weakness of Mrs. W's eyes, as she is tenderly pleased to express it. Dorothy, I hear, has mounted spectacles, so you have deoculated two of your dearest relations in life. Well, God bless you, and continue to give you power to write with a finger of power upon our hearts, what you fail to express, in corresponding lucidness, upon our outward eyesight.'

Most fortunate then was it that he was able to enlist in his service such willing amanuenses as his sister, his wife, and his wife's sister, without whose assistance, probably, many of his most popular compositions would have remained unrecorded. But it was not as mere secretaries that he felt their value; for, when writing to Professor Hamilton, the poet states that Coleridge and his beloved sister were the two beings to whom his intellect was most indebted. Miss Wordsworth possessed moreover quick sympathy for all that he said or quoted, and the pages of her own 'Diary' evince a keen sensibility for all things beautiful, and have in them the very essence of poetry. Take, for instance, this picture of a birch tree:—'Nov. 24. We walked by Gell's Cottage: as we were going along we were stopped at once, at the distance perhaps of fifty yards from our favourite birch tree: it was yielding to the gust of wind, with all its tender twigs: the sun shone upon it, and it gleamed in the wind like a flying sunshiny shower: it was a tree in shape, with stem and branches, but it was a spirit of water'. But her description of the daffodils

is more to our purpose, as showing the community of thought which existed between herself and her brother. 'April 15. We set off after dinner for Eusemere; — wind furious; — Lake (Ullswater) rough. When we were in the woods below Gowbarrow Park we saw a few daffodils close to the water side. As we went along we saw there were more and yet more; and at last, under the boughs of the trees, we saw there was a long belt of them along the shore. I never saw daffodils so beautiful. They grew among the mossy stones about them; some rested their heads on these stones as on a pillow; the rest tossed, and reeled, and danced, and seemed as if they verily laughed with the wind, they looked so gay and glancing'. On comparing this extract with the poem of the 'Daffodils', and calling to mind that the two best lines in it

> ('They flash upon that inward eye
> Which is the bliss of solitude;')

are by Mrs. Wordsworth, we perceive what kindred spirits animated the poet's home. We may here quote, as an instance of the graceful deference which Wordsworth paid to the suggestions of his wife, some remarks communicated to his nephew when referring to the lines on 'Humanity'. He says, 'These verses, and the preceding ones, entitled "Liberty", were composed as one piece, which Mrs. Wordsworth complained of as unwieldly and ill-proportioned; and, accordingly, it was divided into two on her judicious recommendation'.

Having brought our narrative down to the year 1803, we may here remark that about this time two youths, who were afterwards to make some figure in the literary world, started on their academical career,— the on

Oxford, the other at Glasgow. They were De Quincey and Wilson. Though scarcely emerged from boyhood, each had discernment to perceive the power and beauty which gleamed in the poems of Coleridge and Wordsworth, and, singularly enough, each of them ventured to address Wordsworth by letter. Wilson, after an assurance that the Lyrical Ballads constituted the book which he valued next to the Bible, proceeds, with that manliness which was his characteristic through life, to say 'There are a thousand occurrences happening every day which do not in the least interest an unconcerned spectator, though they occasion various emotions in the breasts of those to whom they immediately relate. To describe these in poetry would be improper. Now Sir, I think, in several cases you have fallen into this error: you have described feelings with which I cannot sympathize, and situations in which I take no interest'. To these strictures the young critic received a lengthy and courteous reply. The answer to De Quincey conveyed a standing invitation to the poet's house, and, much as he coveted this privilege, he held the bard in such reverence that though he twice proceeded as far as Coniston, within eight miles of his residence, with intent to call, on each occasion his heart misgave him. Advancing years even, did not diminish this feeling of awe; for when, on a third occasion, he made the attempt and walked as far as the gorge of Hamerscar, whence he could look down on the cottage where dwelt the object of his admiration, as soon as he saw it he shrunk back as if trespassing on some forbidden ground. A like feeling of reverence for exalted character and genius would seem to have influenced the poet Rogers, who relates in his Table Talk that, in early life, he and his friend Maltby felt a strong de-

sire to see Dr. Johnson, and determined to call upon him and introduce themselves. They accordingly proceeded to his house in Bolt Court; Rogers lifted his hand to the knocker, when the courage of the young men failed them and they retreated. Many years afterwards, when this was mentioned to Boswell, he said, 'What a pity you did not go boldly in, he would have received you with all kindness'.

In the autumn of 1803, Wordsworth and his sister having planned a tour in Scotland, and persuaded Coleridge to accompany them, the trio started from Keswick on their walk. They happened to pass through Carlisle at assize time, and on the day, August 16, when the notorious Hatfield was condemned for forgery. This, it will be remembered, was the man who, passing himself off as the honorable Augustus Hope, had deceived and married Mary, the noted beauty of Buttermere, his previous wife being then living. Either Wordsworth or Coleridge, entered the gaoler's house, and saw the unhappy man, and at a later period Coleridge had an opportunity of examining his papers. These were chiefly letters from women whom he had injured in the same way; by the same impostures as he had practised in Cumberland. Coleridge asserted that among these letters were some of the most agonizing appeals that he had ever read to human justice and pity. Yet the travellers on their homeward journey, heard this Hatfield constantly spoken of as an *injured man!* One of the crowd observed to Miss Wordsworth that 'he was far over learned' and another man told her brother that he might learn from Hatfield's fate, 'not to meddle with pen and ink'. The poet, however, does not appear to have taken the warning to heart, for we soon find him penning verses as he advances on his tour

He and his companion visited the grave of Burns, which they found in a corner of the churchyard without a stone to mark the spot. And now, seven years after he had gone to rest, his sorrowing widow had just laid their second son, Wallace, beside him. Filled with painful and melancholy reflections, Wordsworth composed some tender and appreciative lines, from which we quote a few stanzas —

Fresh as the flower, whose modest worth
He sang, his genius 'glinted' forth,
Rose like a star, that touching earth
For so it seems,
Doth glorify its humble birth
With matchless beams.

The piercing eye, the thoughtful brow,
The struggling heart, where be they now?
Full soon the aspirant of the plough,
The prompt, the brave,
Slept, with the obscurest, in the low
And silent grave.

I mourned with thousands, but as one
More deeply grieved, for He was gone
Whose light I hailed when first it shone,
And showed my youth
How verse may build a princely throne
On humble truth.

Sighing I turned away; but ere
Night fell, I heard, or seemed to hear,
Music that sorrow comes not near,
A ritual hymn
Chanted in love that casts out fear
By seraphim.

Continuing their route the travellers passed by Ellesland, Burns's farm-house, and noticing that within half mile of that spot they saw the Cumberland moun-

tains, Miss Wordsworth notes in her diary 'while we were talking of Burns and the prospect he must have had, perhaps from his own door, of Skiddaw and his companions, we indulged ourselves in fancying that we might have been personally known to each other, and he have looked upon those objects with more pleasure for our sakes'. Caledonia was literally 'stern and wild' to our poetic travellers, who seem to have been constantly exposed to storm and rain, so much so, that when they arrived at Loch Lomond and found that three weeks more of broken weather might still be looked for, Coleridge, of less robust constitution than his companions, became faint-hearted and returned home. But neither cold nor storm depressed the ardour of Miss Wordsworth or her brother, and the poems published under the title of 'Memorials of a Tour in Scotland' show how many valuable hints were suggested during this excursion for the after exercise of his genius; amongst which that favourite little poem, 'The Solitary Reaper', and the lines on 'Rob Roy's Grave', may be noted.

But what renders this tour especially memorable, is the first meeting between Wordsworth and Sir Walter, then plain Mr. Scott, who hospitably entertained the travellers at Lasswade, upon the banks of the Esk, where he was then living: subsequently they met him at Melrose, and were conducted by him over the Abbey. Scott was thus far on his way to the Circuit Court, at Jedburgh, in his capacity of Sheriff, and there his new friends again joined him, but he begged they would not enter the court, saying, 'that he would not like them to see the sort of figure he cut there'. They did, however, catch a glimpse of him in his cocked hat and sword, marching in the judge's procession, to the sound

of one cracked trumpet, and were then not surprised that he should have been a little ashamed of the whole ceremonial. Miss Wordsworth said wherever they went with him, he seemed to know everybody, and everybody to know and to like him. But though they found the Sheriff's name a passport which procured them a civil reception when they reached the town, weary, wet, and cold, yet they could only obtain shelter on condition of vacating the room when the judges came out of court to dinner; at which important crisis poor Miss Wordsworth was doomed to shiver in a dull fireless bedroom, while the people of the inn sought lodgings for them in the town.

Returning sunshine cheered their homeward journey, and, on a delightful autumnal evening, they again reached the peaceful Grasmere cottage, where, in the words of the ever interesting Diary, 'we found Mary in perfect health,—Joanna Hutchinson with her, and little John asleep in the clothes basket by the fire'. Poets are proverbially an exacting race, and we are therefore not surprised to find the happy father on his return, making such demands as the following from his first-born.

'And from that Infant's face let joy appear;
Yea, let our Mary's one companion child—
That hath her six weeks' solitude beguiled
With intimations manifold and dear,
While we have wandered over wood and wild—
Smile on his Mother now with bolder cheer.'

In the following year, 1804, on the 16th of August, a daughter was born: his beloved Dora, to whom he was so tenderly attached, and who was the object of several of his sweetest poetic effusions.

Writing soon after to Scott, Wordsworth mentions having again met Coleridge and Southey at Keswick, and adds, 'Southey whom I never saw much of before, I liked much: he is very pleasant in his manner, and a man of great reading in old books, poetry, chronicles, memoirs, &c., particularly Spanish and Portuguese. Farewell! God prosper you. Your sincere friend, for such I will call myself, though slow to use a word of such solemn meaning to anyone, W. W'.

The conclusion of this letter is noteworthy as showing how scrupulously he weighed his expressions and with what caution he meted out his friendship. Good, sincere, and kind, and yet he was not a genial man.

> 'He is retired as noontide dew
> Or fountain in a noon-day grove;
> And you must love him, ere to you
> He will seem worthy of your love'.

Only on rare occasions do we find him expressing hearty admiration of other bards, — contemporary or otherwise, — but we hear of many austere judgments on them and their work.

He always spoke of Burns' 'Scots wha hae' as poor, as a Lyric composition. Mrs. Hemans thus narrates how he gave vent to his contempt of it: — 'How much was I amused yesterday by a sudden burst of indignation in Mr. Wordsworth: we were sitting on a bank overlooking Rydal Water and speaking of Burns. I said, 'Mr. Wordsworth, do you not think his war ode, — "Scots wha hae, &c.", — has been a good deal overrated, especially by Mr. Carlyle, who calls it the noblest lyric in the language'? 'I am delighted to hear you ask the question' was his reply: 'overrated! — trash, — stuff, — miserable inanity! without a thought, — with-

out an image'?— &c., &c., &c., &c. Then he recited the piece in a tone of unutterable scorn, and concluded with a *da capo* of 'wretched stuff''.

Let us contrast with this Wordsworthian caricature, the flattering sketch given by Carlyle in his Critical and Miscellaneous Essays, Vol. I, p. 213. 'Why should we speak of '*Scots wha hae wi' Wallace bled*'; since all know of it, from the king to the meanest of his subjccts? This dithyrambic was composed on horseback; in riding in the middle of tempests, over the wildest Galloway moor, in company with a Mr. Syme, who, observing the poet's looks, forebore to speak,—judiciously enough, for a man composing *Bruce's Address* might be unsafe to trifle with. Doubtless this stern hymn was singing itself, as he formed it, through the soul of Burns; but to the external ear, it should be sung with the throat of the whirlwind. So long as there is warm blood in the heart of Scotchmen or man, it will move in fierce thrills under this war-ode—the best, we believe, that was ever written by any pen'.

Eastern travellers tell us that, when ascending the Pyramids, it is pleasant enough so long as your Arab guides, one on each side, pull in the same direction, but when, as sometimes occurs, they move with unequal step, there occurs an unpleasant feeling as of dislocation. Now the student, diffident of his own powers, having sought the guiding hand of these eminent critics, is mentally dislocated when he finds himself drawn so diversely, but, if perturbed by this or any particular adverse judgment, let him assure his faith in the general pre-eminence of Scotia's Bard, and solace himself with tributes to his genius such as these lines, by so good a man and charming poet as James Montgomery.

'He passed this life's tempestuous night
A brilliant trembling northern light:
Through years to come he'll shine from far,
A fixed, unsetting, polar star'.

After all, Wordsworth probably only intended to express his contempt of a particular view of Burns' poetry; any other theory is inconsistent with the high admiration expressed elsewhere. His criticisms on some of Campbell's poetic images are narrow, and still more narrow, if report speaks true, was his treatment of the Ettrick Shepherd, who, when in company with him and Wilson, and elated by such goodly fellowship, remarked of a transcendent Aurora Borealis that 'it was just an illumination in honour of the meeting of the three poets'. The incident has been variously described, but the accounts agree in representing Wordsworth as questioning the right of the author of 'The Queen's Wake' to rank himself with the bards. Byron, he stated to be deficient in feeling; and, strong as was his friendly regard for Sir Walter Scott, he did not allow it to bias his judgment when he pronounced emphatically that 'Scott's poetry cannot live, for he has never written anything in verse addressed to the immortal part of man, and that what he had written in the way of natural description, was mere rhyming nonsense'. Nor did he attach much value to Scott's historical novels. On his expressing to his friend, H. C. Robinon, an opinion that Mrs. Barbauld 'was spoilt as a poetess by being a dissenter', Mr. R. repeated the following stanzas from her poem entitled 'Life'.

'Life! we've been long together,
Through pleasant and through cloudy weather;
'Tis hard to part when friends are dear;
Perhaps 't will cost a sigh, a tear;

Then steal away, give little warning,
Choose thine own time;
Say not good night, but in some brighter clime
Bid me Good morning'.

On their conclusion Wordsworth confessed that, though not given to envy other people their good things, he did wish he had written that; he also acknowledged the merit of her Essays. Coleridge in his (Literary Life) says that his friend Wordsworth had undertaken to shew that Gray's Elegy was unintelligible. 'It has however, been understood'.

Rogers was once reading Gray's 'Ode to Adversity' to Wordsworth, and when he came to the line,—'And leave us leisure to be good',—Wordsworth exclaimed, 'I am quite sure that is not original; Gray could not have hit upon it'. This 'gives a lively picture of Wordsworth pouncing upon his own property as it were; for, whether Gray took it from Oldham or not, the phrase and idea are so eminently Wordsworthian that we are scarcely surprised at his feeling as if he had been robbed of them'. This is an amusing instance of that strong sense of property which is ascribed both to bees and to poets, both being of that irritable kind as to be extremely jealous of any one who robs them of their hoarded sweets, or as it would appear, even to invade their lines of thought. While on this topic we may quote part of a letter written by Wordsworth. 'We are all of us in spite of ourselves a parcel of thieves. I had a droll instance of it this morning, for, while Mary was writing down for me one of these sonnets, on coming to a certain line, she cried out, somewhat uncourteously, "That's a plagiarism."—"From whom"?—"From yourself"

was the answer. I believe she is right, though she could not point out the passage, neither can I'.

But, not to dwell further on this theme, we may remark, in conclusion, that many sayings attributed to our poet, may be classed among the facetiæ of the narrators, which, if not invented by them, probably received some imaginative touches, and a considerable heightening of colour. For instance, in a recently published volume of Oriental travels, Buckle, the author of the History of Civilization, is made to report Charles Lamb as saying, that Wordsworth remarked to him that he considered Shakspeare greatly overrated. 'There is an immensity of trick in all Shakspeare wrote' he said, 'and people are taken in by it. Now, if I had a mind, I could write exactly like Shakspeare'. 'So you see', proceeded Charles Lamb, quietly, 'it was *only the mind* that was wanting'.

Turning to the 'Memoirs' by his nephew, we find the following authentic record of Wordsworth's estimation of Shakspeare. 'When I began to give myself up to the profession of a poet for life, I was impressed with a conviction that there were four English poets whom I must have continually before me as examples — Chaucer, Shakspeare, Spenser, and Milton. These I must study, and equal *if I could*; and I need not think of the rest.

'I cannot account for Shakspeare's low estimate of his own writings, except from the sublimity, the superhumanity of his genius'.

It may be readily seen what a different import might be given to the former of these paragraphs by the mere omission of the words printed in italics. Luckily they were communicated by a judicious and genuine admirer of the Bard, and we have his real sentiments.

It was a great addition to the enjoyment of this halcyon period of Wordsworth's life, and a solace to him during the absence of his friend Coleridge, who had gone to Malta on account of ill-health, that his brother John was an occasional inmate of the Grasmere cottage, in the intervals between his voyages; he being a sea captain, a man of a noble presence, disinterested and excellent in all the conduct of his life. So fully did he appreciate his brother's genius, that he always urged him to persist, and, spite of every discouragement to keep his eye steady on its object. And to aid him in the attainment of that success which he always predicted, he resolved to devote a considerable portion of the moderate fortune which he hoped to realize to his brother's use, that he might fairly exercise the bent of his genius, unembarrassed by worldly anxieties. Two voyages which he prosecuted with this view, were unsuccessful, but, at the close of 1804, he was appointed to the command of the Abergavenny East Indiaman, a vessel which he described as nearly equal in appearance to a 74. The cargo was estimated at £200,000: she carried £70,000 in specie, and 402 persons.

It was in this splendid vessel that Captain Wordsworth set sail early in February, 1805. His hopes were high, for he had a fair chance of a prosperous and profitable voyage. Owing to the absurd regulations of our merchant shipping laws, he had, at starting, to resign his vessel to the care of a pilot, who, like too many of his class, was incompetent to the task, and ran the vessel on the rocks near the Isle of Portland. A few minutes before the vessel went down, he was seen on an elevated part of the deck, conversing, as it appeared, calmly, with the mate, and when the ship foundered he maintained his post, 'dying, as he had lived, in the

very place and point where duty stationed him'. Writing of this event, Wordsworth says, 'I feel that there is something cut out of my life which cannot be restored; I never thought of him but with hope and delight; we looked forward to the time, not distant as we thought, when he would settle near us, when the task of his life would be over, and he would have nothing to do but reap his reward. By that time too, I hoped also that the chief part of my labours would be executed, and that I should be able to shew him that he had not placed a false confidence in me'.

Nowhere is more touching reference made to this sad event, than in the memoir of John Wilson, by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon.

Wordsworth and his brother, she tells us, were accustomed to repair to a secluded Tarn under Helvellyn, and would sit there, in company, lost in thought. 'They came hither across the hills when John was about to join his ship for the last time, and here they halted before their last farewell. They talked over their future plans of happiness when they were again to meet. As their last act, they agreed to lay the foundation stone of a little fishing hut, and this they did with tears. They parted there in that dim and solemn place recommending each other to God's eternal care. . . . After the first agony was over, the recollection of that parting flashed upon the mind of the survivor, he at last found courage to go there, and in a state of blindness and desolation, sat down upon the very stone. At length he ventures to look around: the tarn is smiling with light; the raven croaking as before, when they parted; all the crags seem the same; the sheep are in the same figures browsing before them; he almost expects to find his brother at his side. He then

thinks of agony and shipwreck. The next time he is there he can look upon the scene with calmness and think upon it all; he comes at length to love the spot, and can talk of it'.

Mrs. Gordon adds in conclusion, 'I one summer day went along with him and heard the melancholy tale. Then whoever goes to that sublime solitude must, with holy feelings and with the wildness of nature, join human sympathies'.

Sorely as he was tried by this, the first great affliction of his life, yet the well-balanced mind of the poet did not allow him to remain long a prey to despondency, and the tranquil happiness of his home seconding his own efforts, enabled him, after a brief period, to resume his wonted labours, and the year 1805 is memorable in his life, for the completion of his first long poem, entitled, 'The Prelude, or the growth of a Poet's mind'. It had been in progress for upwards of *six years*. By most readers it will be considered as the best biography of that portion of his life of which it treats; and by many it is believed to contain some of his best poetry. There is all the freshness and vigour of youth about it, and a hearty expression of feeling and opinion which engages the reader's sympathy. Very touching is the allusion to the calamity which weighed upon him as he drew towards the close of his task, — 'under pressure of a private grief', 'keen and enduring'.

He dedicated this poem to Coleridge, whose high estimation of it is recorded in his 'Table Talk', and by some lines he wrote on receiving it, for he could not but be gratified by this proof of the regard of one whom he considered as possessed of more of the genius of a great philosophic poet than any man he ever knew, or, as he believed, to have existed in England since Milton.

Coleridge always expressed regret that his friend did not at once publish the 'Prelude', which he considered as superior to the 'Excursion'. It was written, as the reader is probably aware, to test his own powers, and if successful to justify the devotion of his life to poetry. In a letter to Sir J. Beaumont, he says, 'the "Prelude" consists of not much less than 9000 lines—not hundred, but thousand, lines long, an alarming length, and a thing unprecedented in literary history that a man should talk so much about himself. It is not self-conceit as you will know well, that has induced me to do this, but real humility. I began the work because I was unprepared to treat any more arduous subject, and diffident of my own powers. Here at least, I hoped that to a certain degree I should be sure of succeeding, as I had nothing to do but to describe what I had felt and thought, and therefore could not easily be bewildered. This might have been done in narrower compass by a man of more address; but I have done my best'. He elsewhere describes this poem as 'a sort of *portico* to "The Recluse", part of the same building, which I hope ere long to begin with in earnest; and if I am permitted to bring it to a conclusion, and to write further, a narrative-poem of the epic kind, I shall consider the task of my life as over'.

The 'Prelude' remained in M.S. for a period of 45 years, not having been published till the summer of 1850, after the poet's death.

An eminent critic, alluding to this great philosophic poem, says, 'at the opening of one of the books, the author describes a dream, which reaches the very *ne plus ultra* of sublimity, expressly framed to illustrate the eternity and the independence of all social modes or fashions of existence, conceded to these two hemi-

spheres, as it were, that compose the total world of human power — mathematics on the one hand, poetry on the other. The form of the dream, with exquisite skill in the art of composition, is made to arise out of the situation in which the poet had previously found himself, and is faintly prefigured in the elements of that situation. He had been reading 'Don Quixote' by the seaside; and had fallen asleep, whilst gazing on the barren sands before him'.

He then dreams that, walking in some sandy wilderness of Africa, some endless Zahara, he sees approach an uncouth shape, mounted upon a dromedary.

'He seemed an Arab of the Bedouin tribes;
A lance he bore, and underneath one arm
A stone, and in the opposite hand a shell
Of a surpassing brightness. At the sight,
Much I rejoiced, not doubting but a guide
Was present, one who with unerring skill
Would through the desert lead me; and while yet
I looked and looked, self-questioned what this freight
Which the new-comer carried through the waste
Could mean, the Arab told me that the stone
(To give it in the language of the dream)
Was "Euclid's Elements", "and this", said he,
"Is something of more worth"; and at the word
Stretched forth the shell, so beautiful in shape,
In colour so resplendent, with command
That I should hold it to my ear. I did so;
And heard that instant, in an unknown tongue,
Which yet I understood, articulate sounds,
A loud prophetic blast of harmony;
An Ode, in passion uttered, which foretold
Destruction to the children of the earth
By deluge, now at hand. No sooner ceased
The song, than the Arab, with calm look, declared
That all would come to pass of which the voice
Had given forewarning, and that he himself
Was going then to bury those two books:

The one that held acquaintance with the stars,
And wedded soul to soul in purest bond
Of reason, undisturbed by space or time;
The other that was a god, yea many gods,
Had voices more than all the winds, with power
To exhilarate the spirit, and to soothe,
Through every clime, the heart of human kind.
While this was uttering, strange as it may seem,
I wondered not, although I plainly saw
The one to be a stone, the other a shell;
Nor doubted once but that they both were books,
Having a perfect faith in all that passed.
Far stronger, now, grew the desire I felt
To cleave unto this man; but when I prayed
To share his enterprise, he hurried on
Reckless of me: I followed, not unseen,
For oftentimes he cast a backward look,
Grasping his two-fold treasure.— Lance in rest,
He rode, I keeping pace with him; and now
He, to my fancy, had become the knight
Whose tale Cervantes tells; yet not the knight,
But was an Arab of the desert too;
Of these was neither, and was both at once.
His countenance, meanwhile, grew more disturbed;
And, looking backwards when he looked, mine eyes
Saw, over half the wilderness diffused,
A bed of glittering light: I asked the cause:
"It is" said he, "the waters of the deep
Gathering upon us"; quickening then the pace
Of the unwieldly creature he bestrode,
He left me; I called after him aloud;
He heeded not; but with his two-fold charge,
Still in his grasp, before me, full in view,
Went hurrying o'er the illimitable waste,
With the fleet waters of a drowning world
In chase of him; whereat I waked in terror,
And saw the sea before me, and the book
In which I had been reading, at my side'.

Among the various poems written by Wordsworth and not published till long after their composition, may be mentioned the Waggoner, which belongs to this

period, 1805–6. It claims attention from the liveliness and ease of its style, as if thrown off at a heat. It is moreover interesting as recalling many scenes familiar to those who have visited the poet's residence, and as presenting a lively description of an institution now superseded,— the slow majestic wain, drawn by eight horses. The proprietor of this team and poor Benjamin's master, was named Jackson, and was Southey's landlord. How felicitous is the description of the drowsy cheer, and far-off tinklings of the horses' bells,

> 'Mixed with a faint and grating sound,
> In a moment lost and found';

and again, old Benjamin's boast, spite of all obstacles of wind, and weather, and precipitous roads,

> 'Yet here we are by night and day,
> Grinding through rough and smooth our way'.

Not till 12 years later did it appear with a dedication to Charles Lamb.

About this time Sir Humphrey Davy and Sir Walter Scott visited Wordsworth, and they ascended Helvellyn in company, and during their walk heard of the fate of young Charles Gough, who it will be remembered fell from a cliff near Red Tarn, and perished, as many thought by the lingering death of famine. His dog, almost reduced to a skeleton, was found there months after the catastrophe, still watching over the remains of his master. The two poets, unknown to each other, recorded in verse this instance of fidelity.

In Scott's poem occurs the beautiful stanza—

> 'How long did'st thou think that his silence was slumber?
> When the wind waved his garment, how oft did'st thou start'?

which Landor praised highly when in conversation

with Wordsworth, who remarked that it was the only good one in the poem, and immediately began to recite his own lines on the same subject.

It is remarkable in how many interviews with the Rydal bard we find mention of his starting off with the recitation of his own verses, and it is curious to observe how differently the fact impresses his various hearers, — some receiving the utterance reverently, and admiring in the deep tones of his voice a resemblance to the roll of far-off thunder—others, and these mostly brother poets, turning restive under it, as an infliction.

The annals of 1805–6, record within twelve months the deaths of Nelson, Pitt, and Fox. Wordsworth seems, from his own remarks, to have recalled the virtues of his lost brother, and combined them with Nelson's heroism, in his poem entitled 'The Happy Warrior', and, being then a liberal in politics, he expressed his grief for the loss sustained by the nation in the death of Fox, in the lines beginning, 'The Vale is up'. Of Pitt he gives his candid opinion in a letter to Sir George Beaumont. 'Mr. Pitt is gone! by tens of thousands looked upon in like manner as a great loss. For my own part, I have never been able to regard his political life with complacency. I believe him, however, to have been as disinterested a man, and as true a lover of his country, as it was possible for so ambitious a man to be. His *first* wish (though probably unknown to himself), was that the country should prosper *under his administration;* his *next*, that it should prosper. Could the *order* of these wishes have been *reversed*, Mr. Pitt would have avoided many of the grievous mistakes into which I think he fell'.

We learn, from many sources, the earnestness with which Wordsworth watched the course of political

events, both at home and abroad, and often he has been known to walk from the vale of Grasmere, up to Raise Gap, on the Keswick road, to forestall the carrier bringing newspapers from that town, even as late as two o'clock in the morning.

He also wrote a pamphlet on the Convention of Cintra, which, however, was little read, and has not been republished; but, it is interesting to find that the love of liberty and hatred of oppression which called it forth, found a more enduring voice in some of his finest sonnets, amongst them, one 'On the feelings of a high-minded Spaniard', is known to have been a favourite with him.

Southey, in a letter to Walter Scott, dated July 30, 1809, thus predicts the fate of this political *brochure.* 'Wordsworth's pamphlet will fail of producing any general effect, because the sentences are long and involved; and his friend De Quincey, who corrected the press, has rendered them more obscure, by an unusual system of punctuation. This fault will outweigh all its merits. The public never can like anything which they feel it difficult to understand. They will affect to like it, as in the case of Burke, if the reputation of the writer be such that not to admire him is a confession of ignorance. . . . . I impute Wordsworth's want of perspicuity to two causes, — his admiration of Milton's prose, and his habit of dictating instead of writing: if he were his own scribe, his eye would tell him where to stop; but, in dictating, his own thoughts are to himself familiarly intelligible, and he goes on unconscious either of the length of the sentence or the difficulty a common reader must necessarily find in following its meaning to the end, and unravelling all its involutions'.

There had been a demand, though small, for the

first volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads', which had now reached a fourth edition. His biographer notes the slow but steady progress which his uncle's poetical reputation was making. He therefore, in 1807, ventured on the publication of two new volumes, containing upwards of one hundred poems. Of course the critics were immediately on the wing to attack every vulnerable point, but not content to stop there, they assailed with equal virulence what was weak as well as what was really admirable; and, if we do not find any who reached the height of inveteracy which Dr. Johnson assigns to the critics of his day, who proceeded with a gloomy malignity, as if dragging to justice an assassin or an incendiary, yet there were many who, like flies, delighted to sting and suck a little blood, to take a gay flutter and return for more.

Confident as to the future destiny of his poems, Wordsworth did not trouble himself concerning their present reception. He reminds a friend who wrote to sympathize with him, of an observation made by Coleridge, that every great and original writer, in proportion as he is great and original, must himself create the taste by which he is to be relished; he must teach the art by which he is to be seen. He elsewhere claims for his poems, that there is scarcely one which does not aim to direct the attention to some moral sentiment, or some general principle, or law of thought, or of our intellectual constitution. And he further expresses 'an invincible confidence that his writings will co-operate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found; and that they will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier'.

The cottage at Town End, Grasmere, proving too

small for comfort in winter, the poet and his family, moved in November, 1806, to a house at Coleorton, in Leicestershire, which belonged to Sir George Beaumont. It was near the Hall, which was then being rebuilt, and the grounds laid out anew. Wordsworth considered himself to have a special aptitude for three things, poetry, judgment in works of art, and landscape gardening. In this latter pursuit he had many opportunities of manifesting his skill, when advising upon and directing the progress of the improvements which his friend had in hand, and in fact, throughout the long intimacy of nearly a quarter of a century, it was a never-failing source of interest to the two friends, to consult as to the best mode of developing the natural beauties of the place.

Several inscriptions for urns, tablets, seats, and grottoes, were written in these grounds. Those who are interested in such efforts will find them in their proper niche, in the volume of Poems. Sir George Beaumont, on his part, painted several pictures illustrative of Wordsworth's poems.

> 'One wooed the silent Art, with studious pains;
> These groves have heard the other's pensive strains;
> Devoted thus, their spirits did unite,
> By interchange of knowledge and delight'.

In the spring of 1808, Wordsworth returned to Grasmere, taking possession of Allan Bank, a new house of ampler dimension than his cottage home. But it had discomforts of its own, which, added to the disturbing influences of change, proved adverse to poetic inspiration, and we consequently find that this was an unproductive year, though additions were made to the 'Excursion'.

The cottage deserted by Wordsworth, did not long remain untenanted. That eccentric genius, De Quincey, was fascinated to the spot, and took up his abode there. Strange as it may appear, considering De Quincey's early homage to the genius of the poet, and his continued literary sympathy during a season of indifference or contempt from the world, yet there was but little congeniality between them. Wordsworth seems to have coldly declined to render some service of countenance or support, which his young and ardent admirer thought he might reasonably have looked for, and he hints that female predjudices were arrayed against him. The vagaries of the 'Opium Eater', may have shocked the susceptibilities of the wife and sister, and have rendered so prudent a man as Wordsworth unwilling to admit him freely within the hallowed circle of his home, or indeed to any close friendship, which, we have already seen, he held to be so serious and sacred a claim.

De Quincey, the victim of overwrought sensitiveness, had decamped from Oxford in a sudden panic, just when his friends felt assured that he was about to take a brilliant degree, in the same year with Sir Robert Peel. He is described, at a somewhat later period, during a protracted visit at Christopher North's, as generally to be found during the hours when ordinary beings are awake, stretched in profound opium-slumber, upon a rug before the fire, and it was only about two or three in the morning, that he gave unequivocal symptoms of vitality, and suddenly gushed forth in streams of wondrous eloquence to the delight of those detained for the purpose of witnessing the display.

Two great characteristics of his opium-dreams were a deep-seated melancholy, and an exaggeration of the

things of space and time. Nightly, he descended into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless he could ever re-ascend. His dreamy vision traversed over landscapes and buildings too vast for the human eye to comprehend. He seemed to live through vast ages of time during the night. No wonder if his eloquent word-pictures, portraying such stupendous scenes, were listened to with feelings akin to awe. How and where he acquired his scholarship seemed a mystery; but there were few such learned and accomplished men, in his day, as De Quincey. He had read enormously, without ever seeming to have books about him. He had made himself his own encyclopedia, and wherever he was, could quote all that was needful for his purpose, date and references included, from memory. The English language seemed in his hands to acquire fresh power, his impassioned prose developing every charm of poetry but its rhythm. Yet with all these acquirements he made an impression only as of a wandering voice, scattering his inimitable writings here and there in magazines and reviews. Towards the close of his life, however, he settled in Edinburgh, to superintend through the press, a collected edition of his works, in fourteen volumes.

Though he and Wilson (Christopher North) were together at Oxford, their acquaintance did not commence till about 1808, when they met at Wordsworth's residence. Wilson having asked him to dinner, he went, and the result was that he remained an inmate, for twelve months, at Elleray, a beautiful estate at Windermere, which his host had just purchased.

Nor is it surprising that they should not have fraternized at Oxford, whither Wilson repaired after com-

pleting his career at Glasgow, for the one as we have seen was all nervousness and shrinking timidity, and of diminutive stature; the other of Herculean frame, fearless and athletic. In 1807, John Wilson passed a glorious examination for his B. A. degree, the more remarkable, as he entered into all the pleasures and diversions of Oxford, open to a spirited young man possessed of abundant resources; his father having left him £50,000. He studied hard, but, at the same time, he patronized the cock-pit, and was noted for pugilistic skill, and as the best wrestler and leaper. He was known, on one occasion, to leap 23 feet on a dead level at a bend of the Cherwell: but we must refer those who would read the history of his adventurous life to the Memoir of him by his daughter, Mrs. Gordon.

In the beautiful retirement of Elleray, Wilson was at liberty to enjoy all the varied delights of poetic meditation, of congenial society, and of those endless out-door recreations which constituted so important an element of his life. Within a short range of country, he found such friends as Coleridge and Southey at Keswick, Wordsworth and De Quincey at Rydal, Charles Lloyd at Brathay, Bishop Watson at Calgarth, the Rev. Mr. Fleming at Rayrigg.

On the way to Coleorton and back, Wordsworth halted in London, and his friends and admirers naturally seized every such opportunity of meeting him, and we read of breakfast and supper parties arranged with this object, while T. Moore, and others, have left many memorials of dinner parties at Rogers's and elsewhere. There was not however, by any means, a complete recognition of Wordsworth's claims, or a general assent to his theories, among those who assembled on these occasions, but this only added gist to conversation

which would have flagged under a tame uniformity of opinion.

It does not appear, however, that Wordsworth shone in these *rencontres*, or was a general favourite among the literary circles in London. His deficiency in those qualities of wit and humour which there abounded, would tell heavily against him. He did not seem to acquiesce in Dr. Johnson's dictum that a man should spend part of his time with the laughers, in order that anything peculiar about him might be presented to his view and be corrected : indeed, had he possessed some sense of the humourous, he would never have admitted into his writings, those epithets and lines, which, to minds attuned to mirth, appeared absurd.

In the concluding volume of Moore's Journal, written when Wordsworth's fame was well established, we trace many passages indicative of a certain dislike to him, or to the tone of his conversation. For instance, when happening to be left *tete-a-tete* with the Rydal bard at Rogers's table, he says, 'My companion, according to his usual fashion, very soliloquacious, but saying much, of course, that was interesting to hear'. 'In giving me an account of the sort of society he has in his neighbourhood in the country, and saying that he rarely went out to dinner, he gave a very intelligible picture, of the sort of thing it must be when he *does* go out. "The conversation", he said, "may be called catechetical; for as they do me the honour to wish to know my opinions on the different subjects, they ask me questions, and I am induced to answer them at great length till I become quite tired". And so he does, I'll warrant him; nor is it possible, indeed, to edge in a word, at least in a *tete-a-tete*, till he does get tired'. Moore has, however, the grace to add that he was

well pleased to be a listener. 'Wordsworth talked of Coleridge, and praised him not only as a poet but as a man, to a degree which I could not listen to without putting in my protest. Hinted something of this in reply to Wordsworth's praises, and adverted to Southey's opinion of him, as expressed in a letter to Bowles (saying, if I recollect right, that he was lamented by few, and regretted by none); but Wordsworth continued his eulogium; defended Coleridge's desertion of his family on the grounds of incompatibility, &c., between him and Mrs. Coleridge: said that Southey took a rigid view of the whole matter, and in short made out as poor a case for his brother bard (and proser) as any opponent of the latter could well desire'.

At one of these gatherings in the Temple, at Charles Lamb's, Wordsworth first became acquainted with Henry Crabbe Robinson, one of his most staunch, yet independent and judicious supporters, and this acquaintance ripening into intimacy, he accompanied the poet on his foreign tours, and eventually came to be looked for as a genial and welcome guest at Rydal Mount, every Christmas. It was also on one of these occasions, that Lamb introduced Talfourd, saying, 'Mr. Wordsworth, I present to you my only admirer'.

The discomforts of Allan Bank, proving, as before stated, adverse to poetic composition, may have led Wordsworth to direct his attention more keenly to the passing events of the day, and to write his pamphlet 'On the Convention of Cintra', to which De Quincey added an appendix, and revised the whole of the proofs.

At a somewhat later period he published an Address to the Freeholders of Westmorland, on the general election, which was written in a clear style, and was held to be a spirited vindication of the claims of the

two Lowthers to represent the county, as opposed to the Liberal candidate, Brougham. He was also much engaged in assisting Coleridge in the bringing-out of a weekly paper, literary, moral, and political, called 'The Friend'. In this publication first appeared the Essay on Epitaphs, which is reprinted among the notes to the 'Excursion'. 'The Friend' was short-lived and terminated abruptly, as did most of the schemes undertaken by Coleridge. The first number appeared, June 1, 1809, the last, March 5, 1810. An eminent critic, remarking upon the grandeur of design, yet incompleteness, of so many of Coleridge's works, says, 'He gives us here the Torso of a church, there the fragments of a constitution, and, moreover, he indulges in Leviathan sentences, digression upon digression, parenthesis upon parenthesis, distinctions the most refined, transitions the most abrupt, and positions the most paradoxical'.

On some occasion, when the merits of a noted controversialist were being discussed, the question was put by one of his admiring followers, 'But do you not allow that he goes very deep'? 'True', was the reply, 'he often dives deep, and — comes up muddy.' And perhaps under this aspect Coleridge appeared to many, who might not, however, be prepared to echo the caustic remark of one who, after listening for a whole evening to one of his monologues, exclaimed, 'Excellent talker! if you let him start from no premises and come to no conclusion'. Southey confessed himself to be one of the number who could not comprehend him. Wordsworth, on the contrary, maintained that there was always a logical sequence in his friend's dissertations, and professed himself indebted to them for the valuable principles and truths propounded in them. There existed certain mental affinities between Wordsworth

'the philosophic poet', and Coleridge the 'poetic philosopher' which rendered their intellectual intercourse of mutual value; and the poet may, like Irving, have preferred to see an idea looming through the mist, to its too palpable display before him.

Quitting, however, the realms of speculation, we may continue the progress of events at Grasmere, which about this time was agitated by an affecting tragedy, resulting in the death of George and Sarah Green, who were lost in the snow, when returning across the mountains from a sale in Langdale. Being detained late, they endeavoured to come down by a near track upon their lonely, desolate farm-house, at Blentarn Ghyll, in far Easedale, but were overtaken by a blinding storm of snow-drift. Voices were heard, late on in the night, which were afterwards believed to have been their calls for help; but as many persons attend these rustic sales to see their relations and friends who may be residing near, and on these occasions the cup goes freely round, and a general hospitality prevails, so that many are tempted to delay their departure, these sounds were at the time supposed to proceed from some of the more jovial loiterers on their homeward route.

Meanwhile, through the long dreary wintry night, the children at Blentarn Ghyll, six in number, the eldest a girl only nine years old, sat anxiously waiting for the return of their parents. The continuance of the snow-storm on the following day, cut off all access to their neighbours, the nearest house being at a weary distance. Throughout this terrible emergency, the little nine-year old maiden, acted with all the care and forethought of a woman, providing for the wants of the younger children, attending to the cow, gathering in peat from the out-house, and, in a variety of ways, ad-

ding to the comfort of all around her. For two or three days this state of things continued, the storm raging without, and the difficulties of management increasing within. But at length, the snow somewhat subsiding and beginning to melt, showed the tops of the low stone walls, the course of the stream, and the direction of the road. Perceiving this, little Agnes took heart, and determined if possible to reach the nearest house. This she accomplished with difficulty, owing to the distance, and the road being still hard to find. Almost overcome with fatigue and grief, the poor little weeping girl told of their forlorn condition, and of her fears respecting her parents. Immediately, the terrible news spread through the vales of Grasmere and Easedale, and every man of every household started, on a preconcerted plan, to search the hills, taking with him his sagacious dogs.

For four days they vainly pursued their anxious search, each night returning weary, care-worn, and disappointed; but on the fifth day, the bodies of their unfortunate neighbours were discovered. George Green was lying at the foot of a precipice over which he had fallen; — his wife Sarah was found on the summit wrapped in his great coat. It was conjectured that, having gone forward to reconnoitre the way, he became blinded by the sudden fury of the blast, and the thick falling of the snow, and had not perceived the precipice before him.

Wordsworth was strongly moved by this incident, and interested himself in various ways for the orphan family, while his sister wrote a simple account of it, concluding with a fervid appeal to the benevolent. The funeral of the ill-fated pair was attended by all the vale, and the poet composed some memorial stanzas. The

children were dispersed among various families, where their welfare was insured, the Wordsworths completing their own large share in the charity, by taking charge of one of them. Contributions were so freely poured in, (the list being headed by her majesty and three of the princesses), that an ample fund was speedily raised which might be applied to the future benefit of the bereaved family of the Greens of Blentarn Ghyll.

In 1811, Wordsworth, finding a change of residence again imperative, removed to the parsonage at Grasmere. Here he had the misfortune to lose two children. One of them, Catherine, died suddenly, on the 4th June, 1812; and it was remembered that on the previous day, one of her brothers was heard to utter the words, 'In the morning it is green, and groweth up, but in the evening it is cut down, dried up and withered', quite unconscious how soon they were to be verified.

The other of the two children, Thomas, was a boy of much promise, dutiful and affectionate, and out of tender love to his lost sister, would repair to the churchyard and sweep the leaves from her grave,—that last resting-place which he was so soon to share. He died on the 1st December in the same year.

The mournful reflections which thus saddened the family, were constantly renewed by the outlook which they had from the house to the church-yard, where the children were buried, and it became desirable to leave so depressing a locality. It happened, therefore, fortunately, that in the spring of 1813 they were able to obtain possession of Rydal Mount, so well known as the residence of Wordsworth for a period of thirty-seven years, and the place where he died, in 1850.

No sooner was he settled at Rydal than he obtained, through the influence of the Earl of Lonsdale, the

appointment of Distributor of Stamps in the County of Westmorland. He was relieved, however, from any active share in the duties of the post, by the services of a young clerk, named John Carter, who for a moderate salary, undertook the labours of the office. The poet's biographer makes grateful mention of the lengthened and faithful services of this official coadjutor, who, besides being well qualified to administer his affairs, was also a judicious corrector of the press, and a sound scholar.

There is a playful passage in De Quincey's 'Selections Grave and Gay', the harmony of which is, perhaps, marred by a slight undertone of envy, in which he notices the singular good fortune of Wordsworth in all points of worldly prosperity, and referring to the crisis when he had to determine the future colour of his life, he goes on to say, 'Memorable it is that exactly in those critical moments when some decisive steps had first become necessary, there happened the first instance of Wordsworth's good luck, and equally memorable that at measured intervals throughout the long sequel of his life since then, a regular succession of similar, but superior, windfalls have fallen in, to sustain his expenditure, in exact concurrence with the growing claims upon his purse. A more fortunate man, I believe, does not exist than Wordsworth. The aid which now dropped from heaven, as it were, to enable him to range at will in paths of his own choosing, and

> "Finally array
> His temples with the Muses' diadem",

came in the shape of a bequest from Raisley Calvert, a young man of good family, in Cumberland, who died about this time of pulmonary consumption. The sum

left by Raisley Calvert was £900; and it was laid out in an annuity. This was the basis of Wordsworth's prosperity in life; and upon this he has built up, by a series of accessions, in which each step, taken separately for itself, seems perfectly natural, whilst the total result has undoubtedly something wonderful about it, the present goodly edifice of his fortunes. Next in the series came Lord Lonsdale's repayment of his predecessor's debt. Upon that, probably, it was that Wordsworth felt himself entitled to marry.

'Then, I believe, came some fortune with Miss Hutchinson; then — that is, fourthly, some worthy uncle of the same lady was pleased to betake himself to a better world, leaving to various nieces, and especially to Mrs. Wordsworth, something or other, I forget what, but it was expressed by thousands of pounds.

'At this moment Wordsworth's family had begun to increase, and the worthy old uncle, like everybody else in Wordsworth's case, finding his property very clearly "wanted", felt how very indelicate it would look for him to stay any longer in this world; and so off he moved. But Wordsworth's family and the wants of that family still continued to increase; and the next person — viz., the fifth, who stood in the way, and must therefore have considered himself rapidly growing into a nuisance was the stamp-distributor for the county of Westmorland. About March, 1814,* I think it was, that this very comfortable situation was wanted. Probably it took a month for the news to reach him; because in April, and not before, feeling that he had received a proper notice to quit, he, good man (this stamp-distributor) like all the rest, distributed himself and his office into two different places — the latter

* 1813.

falling of course, into the hands of Wordsworth. This office, which it was Wordsworth's pleasure to speak of as 'a little one', yielded, I believe, somewhere about £500 a-year. Gradually even *that*, with all other sources of income became insufficient; which ought not to surprise anybody; for a son at Oxford, as a gentlemen commoner, would spend, at the least, £300 per annum, and there were other children.

'Still, it is wrong to say that it *had* become insufficient; as usual, it had not come to that; but on the first symptoms arising that it soon *would* come to that, somebody, of course, had notice to consider himself a sort of nuisance elect;—in this case it was the distributor of stamps for the County of Cumberland. His district was absurdly large, and what so reasonable as that he should submit to a Polish partition of his profits—no, not Polish; for, on reflection, such a partition neither was nor could be attempted, with regard to an actual incumbent. But then, since people had such consideration for him as not to re-model the office, so long as he lived, on the other hand, the least he could do for "people" in return—so as to show his sense of this consideration—was not to trespass on so much goodness longer than necessary.

'Accordingly, here as in all cases before, the *Deus ex machina*, who invariably interfered when any *nodus* arose in Wordsworth's affairs, such as could be considered *vindice dignus*, caused the distributor to be gone into a region where no stamps are wanted, about the very month, or so, when an additional £400 per annum became desirable. This, or perhaps more, was understood to have been added, by the new arrangement, to the Westmorland distributorship.

'Thus I have traced Wordsworth's ascent through

its several steps and stages, to what, for his moderate desires and habits so philosophic, may be fairly considered opulence. And it must rejoice every man who joins in the public homage now rendered to his powers, to hear with respect to one so lavishly endowed by nature, that he has not been neglected by fortune; that he has never had the finer edge of his sensibilities dulled by the sad anxieties, the degrading fears, the miserable dependencies of debt; that he has been blessed with competency even when poorest; has had hope and cheerful prospects in reversion through every stage of his life; that at all times he has been liberated from *reasonable* anxieties about the final interests of his children; that at all times he has been blessed with leisure, the very amplest that ever man enjoyed, for intellectual pursuits the most delightful; yes, that even as regards those delicate and coy pursuits, he has possessed in combination, all the conditions for their most perfect culture—the leisure, the ease, the solitude, the society, the domestic peace, the local scenery—Paradise for his eye, in Miltonic beauty, lying outside his windows; Paradise for his heart, in the perpetual happiness of his own fireside; and, finally, when increasing years might be supposed to demand something more of modern luxuries, and expanding intercourse with society, something more of refined elegancies, that his means, still keeping pace in almost arithmetical ratio with his wants, had shed the graces of art upon the failing powers of nature, had stripped infirmity of discomfort, and (so far as the necessities of things will allow) had placed the final stages of life,—by means of many compensations, by universal praise, by plaudits reverberated from senates, benedictions wherever his poems have penetrated, honour, troops

of friends — in short, by all that miraculous prosperity can do to evade the primal decrees of nature — had placed the final stages upon a level with the first.

'But now, reverting to the subject of Wordsworth's prosperity, I have numbered up six separate stages of good luck — six instances of pecuniary showers emptying themselves into his very bosom, at the very moments when they *began* to be needed. Whether there were any seventh I do not know; but confident I feel that, had a seventh been required by circumstances, a seventh would have happened.

'So true it is, that still as Wordsworth needed a place or a fortune, the owner of that place, or fortune, was immediately summoned to surrender it: so certainly was this impressed upon my belief, as one of the blind necessities making up the prosperity and fixed destiny of Wordsworth, that, for myself, had I happened to know of any peculiar adaptation in an estate or office of mine to an existing need of Wordsworth's, forthwith, and with the speed of a man running for his life, I would have laid it down at his feet, "Take it", I should have said; "Take it, or in three weeks I shall be a dead man".

'Well, let me pause: I think the reader is likely by this time to have a slight notion of *my* notion of Wordsworth's inevitable prosperity, and the sort of lien that he had upon the incomes of other men who happened to stand in his way'.

How acceptable this addition to his income proved may be gathered from the poet's own statement that his literary employments were, at this time, bringing no remuneration nor promising any. Undauntedly, however, he persevered, though uncheered by the popular voice, the favour of the critic, or the hope of gain:

the consciousness of a lofty aim, and the sympathy of a select band of admirers, alone sustaining him. Shortly after the migration to Rydal, we find him completing his longest and most important work, 'The Excursion'. It was published in 1814, prefaced by a grateful dedicatory sonnet addressed to the Earl of Lonsdale.

A combination of circumstances, however, prevented this admirable poem from meeting with the reception it deserved. Its length, its meditative and philosophic character, certain heavy passages, tales which are prolix, and reasonings which are spun out, deterred those who read for excitement or mere transient pleasure.

The multitude who require the mint-stamp of precedent before they pass anything as genuine, or look to the Reviews to tell them what to think, were of course arrayed against it. The Eclectic Review contained a highly encomiastic article, rendering ample justice to the poetic talents of the author, but raising a doubt as to the religious character of the poem, the narrowness of the critic's views leading him to denounce as a lamentable error, the representing a love of Nature as a sanctifying process, and to argue as if it were an impossiblity to see the divinity which is in God's works, without blinding oneself to the inspiration which is in his word.

But it were an endless task to enumerate the diversities of opinion which it called forth: perhaps it left his admirers and contemners where they were, each being furnished with instances to strengthen his own persuasions. Even now, when the merits of the poem are so generally acknowledged, there are many readers who are averse to the dialogue-form in which it is constructed, seeing that there is so little variety in the

tone and style of the speakers; but, as Wordsworth's design was to represent them all as lofty-minded or highly-intellectual characters, we can only say they all speak as if they were Wordsworths, but can hardly apply, in this instance, the good-humoured banter of Goldsmith, who said of Dr Johnson, that if he were to write a dialogue between fishes, he would make his minnows speak as if they were whales.

On this topic the Rev. E. P. Hood writes, 'Exception has been taken to its colloquial style, even by some of its admirers, in that it is a conversation, it betrays want of dignity; let the same charge be preferred against all the writings of Plato. The Poet, it is said, should give utterance to his own thoughts without calling in the aid of dialogue; but, surely, minds entirely emancipated from the trammellings of old methods, will only find in the mode by which the great doctrines of this poem are unfolded, one of its most prominent beauties. In its lovely Historical Episodes and Legends; in its curious paintings of mental life and progress; in its noble discourses against despondency, and upon immortality; in its fine aphorisms of lofty thought and wisdom, are presented for it a claim to a place among the very dearest productions of genius in our language'.

As to the Pedlar, who plays such a conspicuous part in the 'Excursion', Wordsworth says, 'Had I been in a class which would have deprived me of a liberal education, it is not unlikely that being strong in body, I should have taken to a way of life such as that in which my "Wanderer" passed the greater part of his days. At all events, I am called upon freely to acknowledge that the character I have represented in his person, is chiefly an idea of what I fancied my own

character might have become in his circumstances'.

The demand for the 'Excursion' was so limited that an edition of 500 copies sufficed for six years, and another edition of 500, was the total requirement for the next seven years. * It was of this work that Southey writes to Scott, 'Jeffrey, I hear, has written what his admirers call a *crushing* review of the "Excursion". He might as well seat himself upon Skiddaw and fancy he crushed the mountain'.

We read that Thersites railed indiscriminately at the Grecian Heroes, until a blow from the fist of Achilles silenced him for ever. Southey aims another blow at the Thersites of Literature, where he says, 'there are critics who are everlastingly picking out single lines, and condemning their cadence as bad. This might be true if the line could possibly stand alone. But were I to cut off one of the critic's fingers and tell him it was only fit for a tobacco-stopper, that would be true also because the act of amputation made it so'. Wordsworth himself calmly remarked, 'Let the age continue to love its own darkness, I shall continue to write, with, I trust, the light of heaven upon me'.

The necessity of repelling unjust contempt forces the most modest man into a feeling of pride and self-consciousness, but there were many of the poet's friends, who, while admiring the manly avowal which he everywhere made of the sense he entertained of his own merit, yet wished he had left unwritten those supplemental prefaces to his poems, which contained

* Upon the completion of 'Madoc', Sir Walter Scott wrote to Southey, 'I hope you have not and don't mean to part with the copyright. I do not think you and Wordsworth understand the book-selling animal well enough, and wish you would one day try my friend Constable, who would give any terms for a connexion with you'.

severe reproaches on the bad taste of the times, fearing that they might be ascribed to personal feeling and disappointment.

A proposal was, about this time, made to Wordsworth, to exchange his office of Distributor of Stamps for the more lucrative post of Collector for the town of Whitehaven, but he was not to be tempted from the charms of Rydal Mount to reside in a dingy town for a mere increase of salary. The place had become dear to him; he loved the rocky and wooded hills which sheltered his pleasant abode, and made a fine framework to the more distant scenery. The house itself was sufficiently raised on the slope of a hill to look down upon Rydal Church; to the south, the town of Ambleside revealed its lurking place in wreaths of blue smoke, while beyond, an extent of Windermere completed the prospect. The lawn in front of the house, the steps leading from [illegible] with the favourite wild-flowers which he [illegible] tially to cover them, the lawn,—

'A carpet, all
With shadows flung from leaves to strew
In dance amid a press
Of sunshine'—

these, with [illegible] other immediate [illegible]

from its cage, or, as he more choicely expresses it, 'from her osier mansion near'. To complete the picture we must add luxuriant shrubberies, and brilliant and fragrant parterres, of which, however, the poet could only enjoy the brilliancy and not the perfume, the sense of smell having been denied him.

Passing through the garden gate we enter a meadow into one of whose banks nature has built a rough mass of stone, on which Wordsworth was tempted to have some lines inscribed, which now read as an affecting epitaph for himself.

In these fair vales hath many a tree,
  At Wordsworth's suit been spared ;
And from the builder's hand this Stone,
For some rude beauty of its own,
  Was rescued by the Bard :
So let it rest ; and time will come
  When here the tender hearted,
May heave a gentle sigh for him,
  As one of the departed.

In addition to the beauties of his own small domain, Wordsworth had, at all times, welcome access to the adjoining grounds of Rydal Park ; and here again his poems show how he revelled in the natural charms of the region, and delighted to study, from some covert nook, one or other of the beautiful cascades which attract so many visitors

'To mark its eddying foam-balls, prettily distrest
By change of form and want of rest,
  Or watch with mutual teaching
    The current as it plays,
  In flashing leaps, and stealthy creeps,
    Adown a rocky maze'.

With such alluring scenes at hand, and with his en-

joyment of exercise, it seems very natural that Wordsworth should have composed most of his verses out of doors, and that he should have heard, with evident satisfaction, the reply of his maid-servant to one who requested to see his study, when opening the door of one of the rooms, she said, 'this is where master keeps his books; his study is out of doors'. * And seldom was he alone in that capacious study, his sister being ever ready, in sunshine or in storm, to contemplate with him the great volume which lay open before them, and to enliven their progress with her conversation.

> 'Where'er my footsteps turned,
> Her voice was like a hidden bird that sang'.

The Hon. Mr. Justice Coleridge, describing an excursion with Wordsworth, speaks of his *trudging* (and justifies the use of the word as denoting his bold way of walking), his trudging before, clad in plaid jacket and waistcoat, and with a green gauze shade over his eyes. On this occasion he pointed out the precipitous mountain which overhangs Easedale Tarn, and told them how he and his sister, when coming from Langdale, which lies on the other side, by some cause became separated, and a fog coming on, she became bewildered but fortunately sat down and waited. In a short time it began to clear, and as objects gradually emerged from obscurity, she discovered that she had halted, as it were, providentially; being on the very verge of the precipice.

To this out-door method of pursuing his studies,

* His gardener and fac-totum, James, being asked what plants throve best at Rydal, answered, 'Laurels': but this was only a chance hit, as the querist had to inform him of the significance of his reply.

Wordsworth attributed the general state of good health which he enjoyed, in spite of a highly nervous temperament. The act of composition always aggravated any ailment under which he might be suffering. An inflammation of the eyes, to which he was liable, would subside as soon as he desisted from his favourite pursuit, even though he occupied the leisure thus obtained in visiting picture galleries. And he mentions a wound in his foot which yielded only to the same treatment, maintaining its state of irritation when the poetic fervour was indulged in, but healing when he submitted to a temporary idleness.

The self-consuming energies of the brain are said to have been very conspicuous both in Wordsworth and his sister, giving them a premature appearance of age, and in the case of the former deeply furrowing his countenance. Wordsworth reports a personal anecdote in proof of this. He was travelling by a stage-coach, and seated outside amongst half-a-dozen fellow passengers. One of these, an elderly man, said to Wordsworth, upon some anticipations which they had been mutually discussing of changes likely to take place, 'Ay, ay, a dozen years will show us strange sights, but you and I can hardly expect to see them'. 'How so'? said Wordsworth, 'How so, my friend, how old do you take me to be'? 'Oh! I beg pardon', said the other; 'I meant no offence — but what —' looking at Wordsworth more attentively — 'you'll never see threescore again, I reckon'. And upon his appealing to all the other passengers for an opinion, the motion passed *(nem. con.)* that their companion was rather over than under sixty. Upon this, he told them the literal truth, —that he had not yet accomplished his thirty-ninth year. As Wordsworth lived into his 81st year, it is

plain that this premature expression of age, does not necessarily argue any real decay.

Wordsworth's walking powers were remarkable, and he used to narrate with glee, how, on one occasion, after rain, when showing some of the beauties of the neighbourhood to a gentleman fresh from Eastern travel, he expressed a hope that he enjoyed the companionship of the bounding, joyous, foaming streams around, 'No'! was the pompous reply, 'I think they are not to be compared, in delightful effect, with the silent solitude of the Arabian Desert'. Wordsworth's mountain blood was roused at this, and slyly eyeing his Oriental friend, and perceiving that he was encumbered with boots and a thick great coat, he expressed his regret that he did not like what he had seen, but proposed to show him what would be more to his taste; then, striding away, he led him from crag to crag, hill to vale, and vale to hill, till he was obliged to desist for fear of having to carry his spent companion home.

The distance between Rydal and Keswick, about 15 miles, was too great to admit of frequent intercourse between Wordsworth and Southey, but they occasionally mustered their forces, and met on neutral ground for a picnic, or other pleasurable purpose. The most note-worthy of these social gatherings occurred on Monday, 21st August, 1815, in honour of the battle of Waterloo. We quote Southey's description of it. He is writing to his brother Henry, who was married on that day. 'Monday, the 21st of August, was not a more remarkable day in your life, than it was in that of that of my neighbour Skiddaw, who is a much older personage. The weather served for our bonfire, and never, I believe, was such an assembly on such a spot. To my utter astonishment, Lord Sunderlin rode up, and

Lady S., who had endeavoured to dissuade me from going as a thing too dangerous, joined the walking party. Wordsworth, with his wife, sister, and eldest boy, came over on purpose. James Boswell * arrived that morning at the Sunderlins. Edith, the Senhora † Edith May, and Herbert, were my convoy, with our three maid-servants, some of our neighbours, some adventurous Lakers, and Messrs. Tag, Rag, and Bob-tail, made up the rest of the assembly. We roasted beef and boiled plum-puddings there; sung 'God save the King' round the most furious body of flaming tar-barrels that I ever saw, drank a huge bowl of punch, fired cannon at every health, with three times three, and rolled large blazing balls of turpentine down the steep side of the mountain. The effect was grand beyond imagination. We formed a huge circle round the most intense light, and behind us was an immeasurable arch of the most intense darkness, for our bonfire fairly put out the moon'.

Perhaps to this scene we may trace some of the imagery in 'The Curse of Kehama'. This, for instance, in Canto XIV, v. 4:—

'O silent night, how have they startled thee
With brazen trumpet's blare;
And thou, O Moon! whose quiet light serene
Filleth wide heaven, and bathing hill and wood,
Spreads o'er the peaceful valley like a flood,
How have they dimm'd thee with the torches' glare,
Which round yon moving pageant flame and flare,
As the wild rout, with deafening song and shout,
Fling their long flashes out,
That, like infernal lightnings, fill the air'.

* Son of the Boswell of Johnsonian celebrity. † Miss Barker, a lady with whom Southey became acquainted at Cintra.

'The only mishap which occured will make a famous anecdote in the life of a great poet, if James Boswell, after the example of his father, keepeth a diary. When we were craving for the punch, a cry went forth that the kettle had been knocked over with all the boiling water! Colonel Barker, as Boswell named the Senhora, from her having had the command on this occasion, immediately instituted a strict enquiry to discover the culprit, on a suspicion that it might have been done in mischief; — water being, as you know, a commodity not easily replaced on the summit of Skiddaw. The persons about the fire declared it was one of the gentlemen — they did not know his name, but he had a red cloak on, they pointed him out in the circle. The red cloak (a maroon one of Edith's) identified him; Wordsworth had got hold of it, and was equipped like a Spanish Don, by no means the worst figure in the company. He had committed the fatal *faux pas*, and thought to slink off undiscovered. But as soon as, in my enquiries for punch, I learnt his guilt from the Senhora, I went round to all our party and communicated the discovery, and getting them about him, punished him by singing a parody, which they all joined in;

"'Twas you Sir that kicked the kettle down,
'Twas you Sir, 'twas you".

The consequences were that we took all the cold water on the summit to supply our loss. Our myrmidons, Messrs. Rag and Co., had therefore none for their grog, and you, who are physician to the Middlesex Hospital, are doubtless acquainted with the manner in which alcohol acts upon the nervous system. All our torches were lit at once by this mad company, and our way down the hill was marked by a track of fire, from flam-

beaux dropping pitch, tarred ropes, &c. One fellow was so drunk that his companions placed him on a horse, with his face to the tail, to bring him down, themselves being just sober enough to hold him on. Down, however, we all got safely by midnight, and nobody, from the old Lord of 77 to my son Herbert, is the worse for the toil of the day, though we were eight hours from the time we set out till we reached home'.

In 1815, 'The White Doe of Rylstone' was published, being dedicated to Mrs. Wordsworth, a fitting compliment, as the author considered that in this poem he had attained to a greater height of imaginative power than in any other of his works. Many of his admirers, however, consider that he had taken a more lofty flight, when, some years previously, he wrote his celebrated Ode—'Intimations of Immortality' from recollections of early childhood.

The interest in the 'White Doe of Rylstone', as in nearly all Wordsworth's poems, is made to consist in the inner and spiritual life, and the incidents being mostly of a painful nature, it is not likely ever to be popular. The story is that of the Nortons, a family involved in the unfortunate 'Rising of the North', as sung in the 'Percy' Ballad. With this for a foundation, Wordsworth has interwoven the legend, long-cherished and oft-recited in the neighbourhood, of a white doe which was wont to make a weekly pilgrimage from Rylstone over the fells of Bolton, and was constantly found in the Abbey church-yard during divine service.

Disdaining, as is usual with him, all external aids from his subject, whether description of feudal splendour, or personal prowess, the poet aims only to portray

> 'A soul, by force of sorrows, high
> Uplifted'.

—'the subduing of the will, and all inferior passions, to the perfect purifying and spiritualizing of the intellectual nature'. Something mysterious and saint-like in the nature of the inferior animal was of course implied in the legend, and this idea is heightened and embellished in the poem, so as to render it a perfectly ideal embodiment of the finer spirit of the scene. Wordsworth has nowhere sanctioned the notion, which some have entertained, that he intended by the White Doe to symbolize the Protestant church, as Dryden in the Hind, the Roman Catholic. Had he worked upon such a design, the poem might have earlier obtained a sectional popularity, which, however, was never an object with its author.

The poem of 'Peter Bell' was published in the year 1819. The dedication is to Southey. It had remained in manuscript for twenty years: but this lengthened delay, between composition and publication, was exceeded in the instance already alluded to of his Drama, entitled 'The Borderers', which was written in 1795, but which did not see the light for nearly half a century, being first published in 1842: then the 'Prelude', which, after all, is the poet's truest biography, was commenced in 1799, and finished in 1805, but was not brought out till 1850.

'Peter Bell' was not likely to escape without severe handling from the critics, for some of his staunchest friends condemned it. Charles Lamb who pronounced the 'Excursion' to be the best conversational poem extant, and highly extolled some of its nobler passages as Miltonic, and said the reading of it was like spending a day in heaven, yet remarked of 'Peter Bell' that Wordsworth undoubtedly had great thoughts, but that he had left them out here. Even Talfourd, so ardent

in his devotion, speaks of it as a poem written in the first enthusiasm of his system, and exemplifying, amidst beauty and pathos of the finest essence, some of its most startling peculiarities.

Some wicked jester, gifted with more ingenuity and boldness than wit, anticipated the real 'Simon Pure' by a false one, imitating, in a burlesque style, some of the characteristics of the poet's homeliest verse. This grave hoax was perpetrated about a week before the publication of the genuine poem, and appeared in many of the London booksellers' shop-windows, the type and paper nothing differing from the true one, the preface signed W. W., and the supplementary preface quoting as the author's words, an extract from the preface to the 'Lyrical Ballads'.

Another devoted adherent, H. C. Robinson, refers more than once to the attacks on this poem which he was called upon to rebut, but adds, 'this is a storm which I must yield to; Wordsworth has set himself back ten years by its publication. In the following year we find the same friend noting in his Diary the increasing affability of Wordsworth's manner, and that 'he is uniformly so now, and there is absolutely no pretence for what was always an exaggerated charge against him, that he could talk only of his own poetry, and loves only his own words. He is more indulgent than he used to be of the works of others, even contemporaries and rivals, and more open to arguments in favour of changes in his own poems. He has resolved to make some concessions to public taste in "Peter Bell". Several offensive passages will be struck out, such as

"Is it a party in the parlour,
Crammed just as they on earth were crammed;

Some sipping punch, some drinking tea,
But as you by their faces see—
All silent and all damned" !

Also the overcoarse expression

"But I will bang your bones"'.

These violations of good taste, and others which may be passed over, no doubt arose from that total absence of any sense of humour in the poet which has been elsewhere alluded to, for as an instrument wanting one of its strings cannot give out a full harmony, so probably to this mental deficiency may be traced many of these discordant verses.

How few men are capable of severely criticising their own writings as Dr. Johnson is said to have done when in a placid humour, as for instance, when one of his papers in the 'Rambler' was read to him, and his opinion of it being asked, he shook his head and answered, 'too wordy'. At another time, when his tragedy of 'Irene' was being read to a company, he left the room, and on being asked the reason, he replied, 'Sir, I thought it had been better'.

In consequence, perhaps, of the discussions respecting 'Peter Bell', there was a greater demand for it than for any of his previous publications, two editions of 500 copies being required in rapid succession.

If, as we are constantly reminded, history repeats itself, the maxim is certainly no less true of criticism, for let any one wishing to ascertain the opinion of foreigners with regard to Wordsworth, turn to the pages of the 'History of English Literature' by H. A. Tain, translated by H. Van Laun, 1872, and he will find, in reference to the poems of which we have just been

treating, not only the sentiments, but almost the very phraseology, of some of the Reviews and periodicals of fifty years ago. In his second volume, M. Tain, after giving in a somewhat satirical vein what he conceives to be Wordsworth's theory of Art, proceeds to say, 'All this is very well, but on condition that the reader is in his own position; that is, an essentially moral philosopher, and an excessively sensitive man. When I shall have emptied my head of all worldly thoughts, and looked up at the clouds for ten years, to refine my soul, I shall love this poetry. Meanwhile, the web of imperceptible threads by which Wordsworth endeavours to bind together all sentiments and embrace all nature, breaks in my fingers; it is too fragile; it is a woof of woven spider-web, spun by a metaphysical imagination, and tearing as soon as a solid hand tries to touch it.

'Half of his pieces are childish, almost foolish; dull events described in a dull style, one nullity after another, and that on principle. All the poets in the world would not reconcile us to so much tedium. Certainly a cat playing with three dry leaves may furnish a philosophic reflection, and figure forth a wise man sporting with the fallen leaves of life; but eighty lines on such a subject make us yawn — much worse, smile.

'Doubtless also, the ways of Providence are unfathomable, and a selfish and brutal workman like Peter Bell may be converted by the beautiful conduct of an ass full of virtue and unselfishness; but this sentimental prettiness quickly grows insipid. We are not overpleased to see a grave man seriously imitate the language of nurses, and we murmur to ourselves that, with so many emotions, he must wet many handkerchiefs. We will acknowledge if you like, that your sentiments

are interesting, yet you might do without trailing them all out before us.

'You must consider your emotions very precious, that you put them all under glass! There are only three or four events of our lives worthy of being related; our powerful sensations deserve to be exhibited, because they recapitulate our whole existence; but not the little effects of the little agitations which pass through us, and the imperceptible oscillations of our every-day condition.

'The speciality of the artist is to cast great ideas in moulds as great as they; Wordsworth's moulds are of bad common clay, notched, unable to hold the noble metal which they ought to contain. But the metal is genuinely noble; and besides several very beautiful sonnets, there is now and then a work, amongst others, *The Excursion*, in which we forget the poverty of the scenery to admire the purity and elevation of the thought. In truth the author hardly puts himself to the trouble of imagination; he walked along and conversed with an old Scotch pedlar: this is the whole of the history. The poets of this school always walked, regarding nature, and thinking of human destiny; it is their permanent attitude. He converses then, with the pedlar,—a meditative character, who had beeome educated by a long experience of men and things; who spoke well (too well!) of the soul and of God'.——

We will not quote M. Tain's descriptions of the other personages introduced into the 'Excursion', suffice it to remark that they are in the same strain. He then goes on to complain, as we expect a lively Frenchman to do, of the dulness of the poem. 'Observe that *passim* and gradually, reflections and moral discussions, scenery and moral descriptions, spread before us in

hundreds, dissertations entwine their long thorny hedge-rows, and metaphysical thistles multiply in every corner. In short, the poem is grave and sad as a sermon'.

Having thus freely expressed his sense of the gravity and tedium of the work, our French author thus concludes with a more just estimate of its value. 'Well! in spite of this ecclesiastical air and the tirades against Voltaire and his age, we feel ourselves impressed as by a discourse of Theodore Jouffroy. After all, the man is convinced; he has spent his life in meditating on these kinds of ideas, they are the poetry of his religion, race, climate; he is imbued with them; his pictures, stories, interpretations of visible nature and human life, tend only to put the mind in the grave disposition which is proper to the inner man.

'I come here as into the valley of Port Royal: a solitary nook, stagnant waters, gloomy woods, ruins, gravestones, and above all the idea of responsible man, and the obscure beyond, to which we involuntarily move. I forget the careless French fashion, the custom of not disturbing the even tenor of life. There is an imposing seriousness, an austere beauty in this sincere reflection; respect comes in, we stop and are touched. This book is like a Protestant temple, august, though bare and monotonous. The poet sets forth the great interests of the soul. . . . . The verses sustain these serious thoughts by their grave harmony, as it were a motet accompanying a meditation or a prayer. They resemble the grand monotonous music of the organ, which in the eventide, at the close of the service, rolls slowly in the twilight of arches and pillars'.

At a later period, we find Wordsworth writing to Moxon that there did not appear to be much genuine relish for poetical publications in Cumberland, if he

might judge from the fact of *not one copy* of his poems having been sold there by one of the leading booksellers, though Cumberland was his native county. He added his conviction that Byron and Scott were the only popular, or rather fashionable, writers in that line.

A friend who accompanied the poet to Cockermouth, in 1816, mentions as a singular illustration of the maxim, 'A prophet is not without honour save in his own country', that a gentlemanly and intelligent professional man asked, 'Is it true, as I have heard reported, that Mr. Wordsworth ever wrote verse?'

It was at one time currently reported in literary circles, that Rogers said to Wordsworth, 'If you would let me edit your poems, and give me leave to omit some half dozen, and make a few trifling alterations, I would engage that you should be as popular a poet as any living'. Wordsworth's answer is said to have been, 'I am much obliged to you, Mr. Rogers, I am a poor man, but I would rather remain as I am.' As amendments in poetry, even when made by the writer himself, are seldom without some token of a rent, it may be readily imagined how the Rydal Bard, with his fastidiousness as to style, would shrink from the idea of submitting his verses to be revised by another.

If Wordsworth sold very few of his books, he certainly did not give much encouragement as a buyer. He expressed his astonishment at the account which Archdeacon Wrangham gave of his books, and adds that he should have been still more astonished if he had heard that the archdeacon had read a third or even a tenth part of them. His own reading powers, never very good, he describes as diminishing, especially by candlelight; and as to buying books, he says, 'I can affirm that in new books, I have not spent five shillings,

in the last five years. As to old books, my dealings in that way, for want of means, have been very trifling; nevertheless, small and paltry as my collection is, I have not read a fifth part of it'. To another friend he writes: — 'As to poetry, I am sick of it; it over-runs the country in all the shapes of the plagues of Egypt — frog poets (the croakers) — mice poets (the nibblers); a class which Gray, in his dignified way, calls flies, (the insect youth) — a term wonderfully applicable on this occasion. — But let us desist, or we shall be accused of envying the rising generation'.

This indifference to books, especially those by modern authors, is a noticeable feature in a man of such high culture, and we are involuntarily led to contrast him with his neighbour, Southey, who seemed endowed with the faculty of grappling with whole libraries. Or, if in this particular we compare him with Milton, of whom Dryden remarked too broadly, that 'he saw nature through the spectacles of books', how wide is the difference.

Milton's classical knowledge was profusely displayed yet often most gracefully and with admirable effect; and Wordsworth is perhaps more happy in those classic allusions introduced as it were incidentally, than in his more sustained efforts, such as his 'Dion' or 'Laodamia': take, for instance, one of the 'Duddon Sonnets', where, after conducting us along the more placid course of that stream, he at length introduces us to one of its wilder scenes, and makes the bounding river

> Dance, like a Bacchanal, from rock to rock,
> Tossing her frantic thyrsus wide and high.

See also the lines on 'Amphion' and 'Orion' in his

poem on 'The Power of Sound', or more notably the rich Titianesque painting which follows.

> 'The pipe of Pan, to shepherds
> Couched in the shadow of Mœnalian pines,
> Was passing sweet; the eyeballs of the leopards,
> That in high triumph drew the Lord of vines,
> How did they sparkle to the cymbals' clang!
> While fauns and Satyrs beat the ground
> In cadence, — and Silenus swang
> This way and that, with wild-flowers crowned'.

But, suddenly the spell is broken: we are no longer suffered to follow this rabble rout, the offspring of Pagan illusion, we are startled by the poet's sterner voice recalling us.

> To life, to *life*, give back thine ear:
> Ye who are longing to be rid
> Of fable, though to truth subservient, hear
> The little sprinkling of cold earth that fell
> Echoed from the coffin-lid;
> The convict's summons in the steeple's knell;
> "The vain distress gun", from a leeward shore,
> Repeated — heard, and heard no more'.

The summer of 1820 was occupied by a foreign tour, in which the poet was accompanied by his wife and sister. Nothing in Paris interested Wordsworth so much as the Jardin des Plantes with its vast collection of living animals and its noble museum. 'Scarcely', says he, 'could I refrain from tears of admiration at the sight of this apparently boundless exhibition of the wonders of the creation. The statues and pictures of the Louvre affected me feebly in comparison'.

After visiting the field of Waterloo, though far from indifferent to the glory acquired there, he writes—

'We felt as men *should* feel,
With such vast hoards of hidden carnage near,
And horror breathing from the silent ground'!

At Lucerne, the travellers were joined by the ever-cheerful companion, H. C. Robinson, accompanied by two young men who had requested the pleasure of an introduction to Wordsworth. The party was in high spirits and ascended the Righi together. There, they parted at sunrise, hoping to meet again at Geneva, but a few days after, they learned that Goddard and Trotter, their recent acquaintances, had trusted themselves in a crazy boat, on Lake Zurich, and a storm arising, it upset; Goddard was drowned; but his companion swam ashore.

They were all deeply impressed by this event. Mr. Robinson, though aware that Wordsworth was unwilling to take for the subjects of his poems occurrences in themselves interesting or exciting, yet urged him to write on this tragic incident, little expecting him to comply. However, among the poems entitled 'Memorials of a tour on the Continent' some elegiac stanzas will be found.

An extract from the journal kept by Mr. Robinson during this tour, will here be read with interest. 'On the 20th August, 1820, at Schwyz, which Wordsworth calls the "heart" of Switzerland, as Berne is the "head". Passing through Brunnen, we reached Altorf on the 21st, the spot which suggested Wordsworth's 20th effusion. My prose remark on the people shows the sad difference between observation and fancy. I wrote:—"These patriotic recollections are delightful when genuine, but the physiognomy of the people does not speak in favour of their ancestors. The natives of

the district have a feeble and melancholy character. The women are afflicted with goître. The children beg as in other Catholic cantons. The little children, with cross-bows in their hands, sing unintelligible songs. Probably Wilhelm Tell serves, like Henri Quatre, as a name to beg by". But what says the poet?—

> "Thrice happy burghers, peasants, warriors old,
> Infants in arms, and ye, that as ye go
> Homeward or schoolward, ape what ye behold;
> Heroes before your time, in frolic fancy-bold".

> "And when that calm Spectatress from on high
> Looks down—the bright and solitary moon,
> Who never gazes but to beautify;
> And snow-fed torrents, which the blaze of noon
> Roused into fury, murmur a soft tune
> That fosters peace, and gentleness recalls;
> Then might the passing monk receive a boon
> Of saintly pleasure from these pictured walls
> While on the warlike groups the mellowing lustre falls"'.

The close of this eventful tour nearly proved fatal to the Wordsworth party. On their return, at the end of October, they were detained nine days at Boulogne by bad weather, and on setting off from the port they were wrecked. Wordsworth gave himself up for lost, and had taken off his coat to make an attempt at swimming, but the vessel struck within the bar, and the water retired so fast, that when the packet fell in pieces, the passengers were left on land, and were taken ashore in carts. Wordsworth made scarcely any notes during his journeys, relying on his memory for the after record of any impressions he might receive. It is somewhere observed of him, that he was a still man when pleased; and that his remarks were few when travelling; and a friend, who accompanied him to a

large musical party in London, says, 'I noticed a great diversity in the enjoyment of the music, which was first-rate: Wordsworth declared himself perfectly delighted and satisfied, but he sat alone, silent, with his face covered, and was generally supposed to be asleep. Flaxman too, confessed that he could not endure fine music for long: but Coleridge's enjoyment was very lively and openly expressed'.

In the Spring of 1822, we read of an alarming accident which befel the poet; he was thrown from his horse, and received, apparently a very severe injury on his head, fears being entertained of a fracture of the skull, but it proved to be only an abrasion by the sharp-pointed stone against which he was thrown. The rapidity of his recovery surprised those around him, and was supposed to be mainly attributable to his very temperate habits. To the same cause it may be ascribed that, during his long life, he was scarcely confined to the house by so much as a day's illness.

We now begin to trace a steady increase in his poetical reputation, and to observe the justice of Southey's remark, that his writings had at length strongly leavened the rising generation.

The year 1824, was varied by a tour in North Wales, and a gratifying visit to his old college friend and travelling companion, the Rev. R. Jones. He also had an interview with the two celebrated recluses, Lady E. Butler and the Hon. Miss Ponsonby. In 1825 was consecrated Rydal Church, which Lady Fleming had reared at her sole expense: this modest place of worship was frequented by Wordsworth and his family for the next quarter of a century. In the autumn of this year, Wordsworth took part in the festivities which enlivened the district, when Sir Walter Scott, Canning

and other distinguished guests were entertained by John Bolton, Esq., of Storrs Hall. Not long after the occurrence of this memorable visit, we find John Wilson (Christopher North) thus plaintively alluding to it;—'The memory of that day returns when Windermere glittered with all her sails in honour of the great Northern Minstrel, and of him, the eloquent, whose lips are now mute in the dust' Lockhart, in his Memoir of Sir Walter Scott, thus describes this event. 'We were received with the warmth of old friendship by Mr. Wilson. Mr. Bolton's seat, to which Canning had invited Scott, is situated a couple of miles down on the same lake: thither Mr. Wilson conducted him next day. A large company had been assembled in honour of the Minister, it included already Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Southey. It has not, I suppose, often happened to a plain English merchant, wholly the architect of his own fortunes, to entertain, at one time, a party embracing so many illustrious names; he was proud of his guests; they respected him, and honoured and loved each other; and it would be difficult to say which star in the constellation shone with the brightest or the softest light.

'There was high discourse, intermingled with as gay flashings of courtly wit as ever Canning displayed, and a plentiful allowance, on all sides, of those transient, airy pleasantries, in which the fancy of poets, however wise and grave, delights to run riot when they are sure not to be misunderstood. There were beautiful and accomplished women to adorn and enjoy this circle. The weather was as Elysian as the scenery. There were brilliant cavalcades through the woods in the morning, and delicious boatings on the lake by moonlight, and the last day, "The Admiral of the Lake"

presided over one of most splendid regattas that ever enlivened Windermere. Perhaps there were not less than fifty barges following in the Professor's radiant procession, when it stopped at the point of Storrs, to admit into the place of honour, the vessel that carried kind and happy Mr. Bolton and his guests.

'The three bards of the Lakes led the cheers that hailed Scott and Canning, and music and sunshine, and flags, streamers and gay dresses, the merry hum of voices, and the rapid sparkling of innumerable oars, made up a dazzling mixture of sensations, as the flotilla wound its way along the richly-foliaged islands, and along bays and promontories peopled with enthusiastic spectators.

'On at last quitting the festive circle at Storrs, we visited the family of the late Bishop Watson, at Calgarth, and Mr. Wordsworth, at his charming retreat of Mount Rydal. He accompanied us to Keswick, where we saw Mr. Southey re-established in his unrivalled library. Mr. Wordsworth and his daughter, then turned with us, and passing over Kirkstone to Ullswater, conducted us first to his friend Mr. Marshall's elegant villa, near Lyulphs Tower, and on the next day, to the noble castle of his life-long friend and patron, Lord Lonsdale. The Earl and Countess had their halls filled with another splendid circle of distinguished persons, who, like them, lavished all possible attentions and demonstrations of respect upon Sir Walter. He remained a couple of days, and perambulated, under Wordsworth's guidance, the superb terraces and grounds of the "fair domain" which that poet has connected with the noblest monument of his genius. But the temptations of Storrs and Lowther, had cost more time than had been calculated upon, and the

promised visit to Rokeby, was unwillingly abandoned. Sir Walter reached Abbotsford again on the 1st of September, and said truly that his tour had been one ovation'.

Soon after the events just recorded, Wordsworth and Sir Humphry Davy, met for the last time, when the poet observed, with regret, his altered appearance and declining bodily strength, owing to which he could scarcely enter heartily into his favourite pastime of angling, and was obliged to ride to the spot favourable to its pursuit. Wordsworth recalled, with mingled feelings of pleasure and regret, the happy day in the autumn of 1806, when he ascended Helvellyn, in company with Sir Humphry and Sir Walter Scott, and when they dined together in the kitchen of his cottage, at Town End, a day characterised by Mrs. Wordsworth as one of the happiest of their lives. Wordsworth, in speaking of the philosopher, said 'There were points of sympathy between us, but fewer than might be expected'. His scientific pursuits had conducted his mind into a course where the poet could not follow, and diverted it from those objects with which he was best acquainted. Sir Humphry Davy had married in 1812, Mrs. Apreece, a lady of fortune, distantly connected with Sir Walter Scott. He died at Geneva, on the 29th May, 1829, aged 51.

On religious and political questions, there existed great divergence of opinion between Wordsworth and Sir H. Davy. The former had so great a dread of the proposed concessions to Roman Catholics, as to express his opinion on the subject by asking—'Can Protestantism and Popery be co-ordinate powers in the constitution of a *free* country, and, at the same time, Christian belief be in that country a vital princi-

ple of action'? And when the passing of the Reform Bill was imminent, he spoke of the constitution of England as about to be destroyed,—of being so distressed at the aspect of public affairs that he could scarce think of anything else but the afflictions which God was preparing for this sinful nation,—of having witnessed one Revolution in a foreign country, and of not having the courage to face another in his own. He regarded the removal of Romish disabilities as opening the way to Romish domination.

Sir H. Davy, on the other hand, entertained broad and tolerant views on both these topics, saying, as far back as 1827, that 'without Catholic emancipation there would be neither peace nor security for England'. On March 1st, 1829, he writes,—'I am still alive, though expecting every day to be released: I rejoice that the Catholic Question is carried. Without having a very strong political bias, I have always considered this point as essential to the welfare of England as a great country, and connected with her glory, as a liberal, philosophical, and christian community'.

We cannot dismiss this brief notice of the poet's illustrious friend without referring to Coleridge's opinion of him. Cottle having remarked to Coleridge, 'During your stay in London, you doubtless saw a good many of the cleverest men, how do you estimate Davy in comparison with those'? Mr. Coleridge's reply was strong but expressive; 'Why Davy can eat them all! There is an energy, an elasticity in his mind, which enables him to seize on, and analyse, all questions, pushing them to their legitimate consequences. Every subject in Davy's mind has the principle of vitality; living thoughts spring up like turf under his feet.

In the 'Sybilline Leaves', Sir H. Davy was describe-

with some exaggeration, perhaps, by Coleridge, as the individual who would have established himself in the first rank of England's poets, if our country had not decreed that he should rather be the first, in the first rank of its philosophers and scientific benefactors.

In perusing the Memoir of Wordsworth, by his nephew, the reader cannot fail to notice the close intimacy of the poet and his family, with Sir George and Lady Beaumont; his oft repeated visits to Coleorton, and the interest he took in perfecting the grounds there. The design of Sir George to erect a church on his own estate, led to reflections on church history, which resulted in the composition of the series of 'Ecclesiastical Sonnets'; one of which, in praise of Laud, brought down upon the bard the charge of bigotry, from which, however, he defended himself by explaining that it was in reference to his measures for restoring spiritual practices which had been abandoned that he spoke in terms of admiration. But it is difficult to understand exactly what is implied in this defence, and in his assertion that 'had not Laud, and others who shared his opinions, and felt as he did, stood up in opposition to the Reformers of that period, it is questionable whether the Church would ever have recovered its lost ground, and become the blessing it now is'.

Sir George Beaumont died at the commencement of the year, 1827, and his Lady did not survive him more than a year and a-half. Wordsworth keenly felt the loss of these ever kind and sympathizing friends.

Being such an alarmist as to public affairs, there was much to agitate him at this period, and up to the end of 1831, when on the 22nd of September, at 3 o'clock in the morning, a majority of 109 in a house of 585 members, passed what he designated as the 'Monstrous

Bill'. Writing, even in 1834, he says, 'Since the night when the Reform Bill was first introduced, I have been convinced that the institutions of the country cannot be preserved.' He also uses strong language in anticipation of members being 'driven, or tempted, to vote against their consciences, by the clamour of their sectarian and infidel constituents'.

Depressed in spirits, owing to the illness of his sister, and of his friend Coleridge, and moreover suffering from his ever-recurring affliction of inflamed eyes, he journeyed, with his daughter, to Scotland, to his final interview with Sir Walter Scott, who, broken in health and in fortune, was about to start for the continent. Lockhart thus alludes to this visit:—'On the 21st September, 1831, Wordsworth and his daughter came up from Westmorland, to take leave of Sir Walter. On the 22nd, all his arrangements being completed, and Laidlaw having received a paper of instructions, the last article of which repeats cautions to be very careful of the dogs, these two great poets, who had through life loved each other well, and, in spite of very different theories as to art, appreciated each other's genius more justly than inferior spirits did either of them, spent the morning together in a visit to Newark. Hence, the last of the three poems by which Wordsworth has connected his name to all time with the most romantic of Scottish streams. But I need not transcribe a piece so well known as "Yarrow Revisited"'.

Coleridge, whose declining health we have noticed, died in the summer of 1834, Wordsworth losing in him the friend with whom he had lived in the closest communion of mind for thirty years.

If the period which we have just passed under review was one of trial and anxiety to the poet, yet it

was not without its compensations, amongst which we may note the increasing estimation in which his works were held in England and America, and the respect and homage paid to him personally, the latter circumstance, however, leading to frequent intrusions on the privacy of Rydal Mount, of which an amusing instance is recorded in the case of a tourist from Manchester, who persisted in the face of more than one denial, stating as a last resource that, having had the honour of shaking hands with the Hero of Waterloo, he trusted, as the greatest general of the age had accorded him that privilege, that the greatest poet would not withhold a similar favour.

About this time he was also much gratified by the dedication of her Poems to him by Mrs. Hemans, a lady whose genius he admired, but regretted that the necessity of writing for a living had often compelled her to compose too hurriedly to give her talents fair play.

Perhaps one of the most interesting portions of the Memoir of Wordsworth, to which we have so often referred, is that communicated to the author by the Hon. Justice Coleridge, who, after going on the northern circuit with Baron Parke, resided, during the vacation of 1836, at Fox How, Dr. Arnold's charming retreat, near Rydal. The proximity of this spot to Rydal Mount naturally led to frequent intercourse with the bard, and, during their rambles and excursions, many interesting reminiscences of the author of 'Christabel' and 'The Ancient Mariner' were recalled. The companionship of so amiable and gifted a man as Justice Coleridge contributed to cheer Wordsworth under the grief which weighed upon him, as he became convinced of the permanent obscuration of the bright and ardent

intellect of his beloved sister, a circumstance which proved a source of great sorrow to all who had enjoyed the happiness of her society.

From the notes just referred to, we learn that Wordsworth looked upon carelessness in the finish of a poem, almost as an offence, but, with reference to the revising and correcting of poems, Justice Coleridge remarks, 'No doubt he carried this, in his own case, to excess, when he corrected so largely in the decline of life, poems written in early manhood, under a state of feelings and powers which it was impossible to reproduce, and yet which was necessary, generally speaking, for successful alteration. I cannot but agree with many who think that on this account the earlier copies of his poems are more valuable than the later'. A walk with the Poet on a drizzly muddy day is thus commemorated. 'The turf was sponging out water at every step, through which he stalked as regardless as if he were of iron, and with the same fearless, unchanged pace, over rough and smooth, slippery and sound. We went up by the old road from Ambleside to Keswick. This old road was very steep, after the fashion of former days, crossing the hill strait over its highest point. A new cut had been made, somewhat diminishing its steepness, but still leaving it a very inconvenient and difficult ascent. At length another alteration was made, and the road was carried on a level, round the foot of the hill. Arnold pointed these out to me, and, quizzing my politics, said, the first denoted old Tory corruption, the second bit by bit, the third Radical Reform'.

In the March of 1837, Wordsworth, accompanied by Mr. H. C. Robinson, started on a long-desired pilgrimage to Rome. Having reached his 67th year, it was desirable for him to travel leisurely. They therefore

bought a carriage in which to pursue their journey. As on former occasions of foreign tour, Wordsworth wrote nothing on the spot, but trusted to the vividness of his memory, in some instances, perhaps, to his dreams, for there are verses under the title, 'Memorials of a Tour in Italy', which might as well have been written after nodding in his arm-chair at Rydal, and, with reference to a sonnet on seeing the picture of the Baptist, by Raffaelle, in the gallery at Florence, the poet himself says, 'It was very hot weather during the week we staid at Florence, and never having been there before, I went through much hard service. I am, therefore, not ashamed to confess, I fell asleep before this picture, and sitting with my back towards the Venus de Medicis'. Aware, perhaps, that this want of enthusiasm might appear somewhat strange in one claiming to be a lover and judge of works of art, (a claim, possibly, somewhat problematic), Wordsworth cites the example of Buonaparte, who slept soundly up to the moment when one of his great battles was fought, and when some sycophant remarked upon it as a proof of his great calmness of mind, said frankly, that he slept because, from bodily exhaustion, he could not help it. He notices also the fact, that criminals, on the night previous to their execution, seldom awake before they are called, a proof that the body is the master of us far more than we are willing to allow.

His companion informs us that, when at Nismes, he took him to see the Maison Carreé and the Arena. He acknowledged their beauty but experienced no great pleasure from such sights, saying that he was unable, from ignorance, to enjoy them; that he received an impression, and that was all. 'I have no science', he would say, '*and can refer nothing to principle*'. This

explains much of his indifference to objects of general interest. He was, on the other hand, delighted by two beautiful little girls playing with flowers near the Arena; and was heard saying to himself, 'Oh you darlings! I wish I could put you in my pocket and carry you to Rydal Mount'. He was sufficiently impressed with the Coliseum. The Pantheon seemed to him hardly worth notice, compared with St. Peter's. 'We looked also', says H. C. R., 'into the church at St. Onofrio, where Tasso lies buried; also Guidi the poet. Wordsworth is no hunter after sentimental relics. He professes to be regardless of places that have only an outward connection with a great man, but no influence on his works. Hence he cares nothing for the burying place of Tasso, but has a deep interest in Vaucluse. The distinction is founded on just views, and real, not affected, sympathy'.

On observing the diminutive size of the celebrated Tarpeian rock, he wrote the sonnet beginning

> 'Is this, ye Gods, the Capitolian Hill?
> Yon petty steep in truth the fearful rock
> Tarpeian named of yore, and keeping still
> That name, a local Phantom proud to mock
> The Traveller's expectation'.

We have all of us, at some time or other, been deluded by the blandishments of the poets, and it is consolatory, therefore, to find the bard of Rydal admitting himself, in this respect, to have been led astray like less philosophic mortals, and that, when at Florence, he took an excursion of fifteen miles to Pelagio, and thence walked to the Benedictine monastery, which has been an object of interest to all English travellers, chiefly because her great poet has introduced it into a simile ·

> 'He called
> His legions, angel forms, who lay entranced,
> Thick as autumnal leaves that strew the brooks
> In Vallombrosa, when the Etrurian shades
> High over-arched embower'.

With the music of Milton's lines ringing in his ears, and with imagination kindled, in the expectation of finding a convent buried in shady woods, Wordsworth confesses his disappointment, on arriving there, to see a building situated in an open crescent of the hill, and commanding an extensive prospect. He noticed, however, an avenue of pines planted near, which, from the great height to which some of the trees attain, is an imposing object, and mentions, that the natural growth of the valley is such as might cause an abundant fall of leaves in the autumn.

His companion, gifted with eminent conversational powers, would, doubtless, entertain him on the way, with lively descriptions of his own experiences of baffled expectations when wandering on classic ground. Of these, an amusing sample may be taken from a letter of his, dated from Naples. 'I, in mercy, spare you an enumeration of all the wonders of my last journey. I merely say that from my bed I could see the lurid light from the burning mountain, that I made the usual excursion to the Phlegræan Fields, saw the passage into hell through which Æneas went, and even beheld Acheron itself and the Elysian fields. — To be sure that same Virgil did *bounce* most shamefully. Would you believe it? The lake of Avernus is a round muddy pond, and the abode of the blessed looks not a bit better than a hop-garden. So Cumæ, and Baiæ, and Ischia, and Capua, are all like gentlemen's seats, with none but servants kept there to shew them to visitors.

Vesuvius is but an upstart of yesterday. All Naples, and the country around, betray the fire that is burning beneath. Every now and then a little shake of the earth reminds people of their peril. Peril did I say? There is none — St. Januarius is a sufficient protection. —— Then to Syracuse — an awful place. This city of two millions of men, is shrunk to a mean town on a tongue of land. Not a spot worth seeing to the bodily eye, but to the eye of memory how glorious! I was taken to a dirty cistern: seventy women were washing, with their clothes tucked up, and themselves standing in a pool, — a disgusting scene — What do you bring me here for? "Why, sir, this is the fountain of Arethusa"!!! Oh, those rascally poets again, say I. Plato did right to banish the liars from his republic. The day before, I was in good spirits, for I saw the very rock that the Cyclops hurled at Ulysses'.

The travellers returned in August, after an interesting journey of nearly six months' duration.

In the following year, 1838, the University of Durham took the lead in conferring an academic distinction on Wordsworth, in recognition of the public service rendered by him to the literature of the country. In reply to the congratulations of an American friend, on the estimation in which his genius was held through that vast continent, he writes, 'I wish I could feel as lively as you do on this subject, or even on the general destiny of those works. Pray do not be long surprised at this declaration. There is a difference of more than the length of your life, I believe, between our ages. I am standing on the brink of that vast ocean I must sail so soon; I must speedily lose sight of the shore; and could not once have conceived how little I now am troubled by the thought of how long, or how short a

time they who remain on the shore may have sight of me'. We find here traces of that advanced state of mind alluded to by Robert Montgomery in some lines written at a later period, when he could address him as

> 'The laurelled priest of poetry and truth,
> August with years, by mournful calm subdued'.

But whether desirous of fame or indifferent to it, honours began to be showered upon him. Oxford was prompt in following up the lead so honourably taken by Durham, and, in 1839, conferred the degree of D. C. L. upon William Wordsworth. He was presented for his degree, according to the usual form, at Oxford; probably by the Regius Professor of Civil Law, and not, as has been suggested, by Keble, whose turn it was in that year, as Professor of Poetry, to deliver the Creweian oration. It must have been highly gratifying to the poet to listen to the graceful eulogy which Keble introduced into his address, at this Commemoration; whilst, on the other hand, Keble gladly welcomed such an opportunity of doing honour to one whom he so much admired both as a poet and a man. That portion of the oration to which we have referred, has been thus translated from the original Latin: — 'On this also I might insist, that the University, or even Literature itself, cannot well exist without that austere and solid suavity with which youth, well and wisely spent in poverty, is wont to imbue those who are submitted to its training. But I judged, gentlemen of the University, that I should satisfy, and more than satisfy, what this topic demands, if only I should recall to your recollection, him specially now present with us in this illustrious circle, who, singly among all poets, and above all, has exhibited the manners, the pursuits,

and the religious sentiments of the poor, I will not merely say in a favourable light, but in a light kindled by rays from heaven. To the study of this poetry, therefore, they should, in my opinion, be now referred, who earnestly desire to comprehend that close and intimate alliance which exists between honourable poverty and the severer Muses, sublime Philosophy, yea, even our most holy Religion'.

The scene has been well described by an eye witness, who is naturally led to associate with it, another to which it bears many points of resemblance. 'It was my lot, (says the Rev. F. W. Robertson), during a short university career, to witness a transition and a reaction, or revulsion of public feeling with respect to two great men. The first of these was Arnold of Rugby. You will all recollect how, in his earlier life, Arnold was covered with suspicion and obloquy; how the wise men of his day charged him with latitudinarianism, and I know not how many other heresies. But the public opinion altered, and he came to Oxford and read lectures on Modern History. Such a scene had not been witnessed in Oxford before. The lecture-room was too small; all adjourned to the Oxford theatre; and all that was most brilliant, all that was most wise and distinguished, gathered together there. He walked up to the rostrum with a quiet step and manly dignity. Those who had loved him when all the world despised him, felt that at last the hour of their triumph had come. But there was something deeper than any personal triumph they could enjoy, and those who saw him then will not soon forget the lesson read to them by his calm, dignified, simple step,—a lesson teaching them the utter worthlessness of unpopularity or of popularity as a test of manhood's worth.

'The second occasion was when, in the same theatre, Wordsworth came forward to receive his honorary degree. Scarcely had his name been pronounced, than, from three thousand voices at once, there broke forth a burst of applause, echoed and taken up again and again when it seemed about to die away, and that thrice repeated. There were young eyes there, filled with an emotion of which they had no need to be ashamed, and there were hearts beating with the proud feeling of triumph, that, at last the world had recognized the merit of the man *they* had loved so long and acknowledged as their teacher. And yet, when that noise was protracted, there came a reaction in their feelings, and they began to perceive that that was not, after all, the true reward and recompense for all that Wordsworth had done for England: it seemed as if all that noise was vulgarizing the poet; it seemed more natural and desirable to think of him afar off among his simple dales and mountains, the high priest of Nature, weaving, in honoured poverty, his songs to liberty and truth, than to see him there clad in a scarlet robe and bespattered with applause'.

When the Prelections were concluded and published, Keble sealed his testimony by dedicating the volume to Wordsworth, with an inscription, very beautiful in itself, and peculiarly gratifying to the Poet, as describing very correctly, what it had been his object, as a poet, to accomplish by his writings. Appropriate as are these acts of homage when paid to such men as Wordsworth, it must be with very mixed feelings that those on whom the duty principally devolves (especially if clergymen) take their part in the ceremonial of conferring degrees on mere warriors, the agents of that false glory by which the pride of man is so much fos-

tered. During the Royal and Imperial visits to Oxford in 1814, it was puzzling to imagine how the University would contrive to make that hardy veteran, Prince Blucher, a member of their learned and religious body. However, a Fellow of Oxford, long resident in the University, and well acquainted with all its forms, solves the puzzle, by stating that Blucher was created neither a Theologian, nor a Civilian, but, with *verbal*, if not with *literal* propriety, a doctor of *Canon* Law.

Amongst the assembled throng, few could have witnessed the exciting scene with stronger emotions than his son William, and his nephew, the Rev. John Wordsworth, M. A., Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, eldest son of the master of that College. John Wordsworth was a profound scholar, and in his uncle's opinion, one of the most accurate of men, and he had indulged the hope that a new edition of his Poems, which was about to be published, would have the benefit of his revision. But it was ruled otherwise, as he gradually declined in health and died at the close of the year. In a letter of condolence to the sorrowing father, the poet wrote, — 'He is a power gone out of our family, and they will be perpetually reminded of it. But the best of all consolations will be with us — that his life had been as blameless as a man's well could be, and through the goodness of God he is gone to his reward'.

About this time we find mention of an affecting interview between Wordsworth and Southey, the powers of whose once active mind had now so completely failed that the presence of the closest friends afforded him no pleasure. He did not recognise his brother poet, but, on hearing his name, looked up, his eyes flashing for a moment with their wonted brightness

then suddenly subsiding into an apathetic state, he continued patting his books with both hands, affectionately as a child would cherish its toys. Some time previous to this, Wordsworth had remarked that he seemed dead to all but books, and that when torn from them, he became restless and out of his element. It happened, from this and other reasons, that the two neighbours seldom met; Wordsworth's words being, 'I therefore hardly see him for years together'.

Mr. H. C. Robinson also remarks that when in Paris with Southey, in 1838, to the best of his belief, he never once visited the Louvre, and cared for nothing but the old book shops. But all men are true to their instincts, and we learn, from the same diary, that the writer saw at Rome, some gentlemen who had brought over their dogs with them to sport in the Campagna. They were delighted with their sport, and had been a week there without seeing St. Peter's, and probably would leave Rome without going in.

The 'Sonnets on the Punishment of Death' appeared in 1840. Wordsworth says, concerning them, 'an outcry, as I expected, has been raised against me by weak-minded humanitarians'. Elizabeth B. Browning, was one of these 'weak-minded humanitarians'. We quote her words,—'And yet if we were recording-angel instead of recording-reviewer, we should drop a tear,—another,—and end by weeping-out that series of sonnets in favour of capital punishment—grieving that a hand which has traced *life* warrants so long for the literature of England, should thus sign a misplaced 'Benedicite' over the hangman and his victim'. Hartley Coleridge being asked on what subject a man might write, on which woman might not also write, seeing how much more easy it was to say that woman

should be feminine than to define what is feminine. 'Let no lady' was the reply, 'on pain of my displeasure for a twelvemonth, write a sonnet in *favour* of capital punishments. Murderers no doubt ought to be hanged; but God forbid that one of the softer sex should advocate in numbers the rights of the gallows. I have no great predilection for the subject myself. Wordsworth has chosen it,—let him keep it,—he is man enough for it anyhow'.

On a bright sunny day in July, the Queen Dowager and her sister, attended by Lords Denbigh and Howe, visited Rydal, when Wordsworth met them at the lower waterfall, with which her majesty was much pleased. She was also gratified with the simple rural spectacle which greeted them as they left the Park. A procession of fifty children was drawn up in two lines near the gate of Rydal Mount. They were accompanied by a band of music, and carried flags and bright garlands of flowers, such as, about this season, are annually prepared for the time-honoured ceremony of Rush-Bearing. After cordially shaking hands with Mrs. Wordsworth, and in the most friendly manner enquiring for Dora, the poet's daughter, who was introduced to her, she proceeded on her tour. Wordsworth treats the desire which she professed, of having a cottage in the district, merely as a natural way of expressing the pleasure which the scenery excited in her mind.

This summer was further enlivened by a pleasant little excursion from Lowther to Rydal in company with Rogers. Alighting at Lyulphs Tower on the banks of Ullswater, they proceeded to Ara Force, and found the torrent dashing down in its fullest grandeur, in honour of the two bards. Another short journey which he took in November of this year, had nearly termi-

nated disastrously, for when travelling in a gig towards Keswick, and toiling up a narrow and precipitous part of the road, he espied the mail coach coming furiously down the slope at only forty yards' distance. His servant made all speed to get over a narrow bridge which was just before them, and draw up close to the wall. The driver of the mail, being an unpractised hand, was unable to slacken his pace, or to avoid the impending collision, but came on at full speed, and striking violently against the gig, drove it, and those in it, as well as the horse, back some yards, when all together were precipitated through a gap in the wall and lost sight of in a plantation below. Most fortunately they escaped without serious bodily injury. We have heard the driver of the mail say, that the pleasantest words ever spoken to him, did not gratify him so much as the vigorous abuse with which he was greeted by the poet as he emerged from the plantation.

The spring of the succeeding year was signalized by an event of the deepest interest to Wordsworth, namely, the marriage of his only daughter, Dora, to Edward Quillinan, Esq. They were married in St. James's Church, Bath, May 11, 1841, the Wordsworth family being at the time on a visit to a very intimate friend in that city. How dear was his daughter to the poet, is shewn by every allusion he makes to her, whether in his poems or in private letters. An intimate friend says of her,—'She was endeared to him, and all around her, by her entire freedom from all thought of self, by the graces of her lively social character, and the solidity and correctness of her understanding. Her presence, like that of Una, "made a sunshine in a shady place"'.

Edward Quillinan, Esq., was eldest son of John

Quillinan, a merchant of Oporto, and was in early youth sent to various Roman Catholic schools in England for education, on the completion of which he returned to Oporto. Shortly after, however, on the advance of the French, he quitted Portugal, and entered the English army as cornet, by purchase, in the 2nd Dragoons (Queen's Bays) in 1808. On the return of the 23rd Light Dragoons from Talavera, he purchased a lieutenancy in that regiment, and finally exchanged into the third Dragoon Guards, joining his regiment in Spain in 1813, and was with it during the campaign of 1814 until the close of the war at Toulouse, when he received a medal of honour for that day. In 1817, Mr. Quillinan married Jemima, the second daughter of Sir Egerton Brydges, Bart. of Denton, near Dover, widely known as a literary amateur. He impaired his fortune by indulging in the expensive luxury of a private press, (at Lee Priory), from which he issued his own poems and numerous reprints of old English books : but still more by an unsuccessful attempt to prove his title to the Dukedom of Chandos. Mr. Quillinan was for some time with his regiment in Ireland, and subsequently in Scotland. In 1820 he was quartered at Penrith, which afforded him the opportunity of introducing himself to Wordsworth, of whose works he had always been a zealous admirer. Shortly after this, he quitted the army and went to reside at Rydal; attracted thither as much by a desire to be near the poet, as by the beauty of the scenery. Mrs. Quillinan, his first wife, lived but a few years, it having been her sad fate to perish from injuries sustained in consequence of her dress taking fire. During the short interval allowed her after the accident, she commended her two infant daughters to

the care of her friend and neighbour, Dora Wordsworth. The intimacy thus occasioned, led, after the lapse of nearly twenty years, to the marriage we have recorded.

From the time when he left the army, Mr. Quillinan devoted much of his time to literary pursuits, writing many poems, and contributing various articles to the periodicals of the day, among which his reviews of foreign literature will perhaps be read with most interest, as he was possessed of considerable critical talent, and excelled in the epigram. He translated a large portion of the 'Lusiad' of Camoens, the 'Virgil of Portugal', but not meeting with sufficient encouragement to the undertaking, did not complete it for publication. The translation of the History of Portugal, by Senor Herculano, librarian to the king, was also a task in which he heartily engaged. This work, at least so much of it as was then published, is described by Dr. Wordsworth as so elaborately and ably written by the Portuguese author, as to lessen regret for the non-accomplishment of Mr. Southey's long-meditated work on the same subject. A pleasing essay on the Laureates of England is also from the pen of Mr. Quillinan.

An interesting tour was now made by Wordsworth in Devon and Somerset, in the course of which he renewed his acquaintance with scenes from which he drew so much of his early inspiration, when he and his sister took up their abode in that large mansion at Alfoxden, in an extensive park alive with deer,— where they found woods wild as fancy ever planted, brooks clear and pebbly as in Cumberland, romantic dells and villages, and formed dreams of future happiness as they walked unimpeded for miles over the hill tops with the distant sea ever in view. It was a renewal of acquain-

tance; but it was also a farewell, and as the doing of anything for the last time has proverbially an element of sadness in it, it may be that Wordsworth did not pass unmoved through scenes which recalled the memory of his early intercourse with Coleridge, and of those happy rambles with his sister now lost to such enjoyment.

From this period there is but little of literary interest to note respecting Wordsworth: he added now and then an Ecclesiastical Sonnet or some occasional verses to the list of poems, and made alterations, not always improvements, in his earlier works. Many are of opinion that all his best productions appeared before his fortieth year, and that after that period however gracefully he may have written, yet his later works lack the grandeur and originality which were developed in those of earlier date. Professor Shairp divides Wordsworth's poetry as pertaining to three epochs, and describes the spring-time of his genius as reaching from his first settling at Racedown, about 1797, to his leaving Town End cottage at Grasmere, in 1808. The second epoch, or midsummer of his poetry, is made to include the time at Allan Bank and his first years at Rydal, as far as 1818–20, during which period the Excursion, Laodamia, Dion, and the Duddon Sonnets were composed. The third, or sober autumnal epoch, reaching from 1820 till he ceased the work of composition, is the time of the Ecclesiastical Sonnets, Yarrow Revisited, and the Scottish poems of 1833, and lastly of the Memorials of his Italian Tour in 1837. The two volumes published in 1807, containing the very prime ore of his genius, called forth the vituperation of Jeffrey; but many shafts were levelled at him from other quarters besides the Edinburgh Review, and

even wits, who were friendly to him and to those absurdly classified with him as 'The Lake School', could not resist an occasional sally at their expense. Thus we read, in a late number of 'Belgravia', that the Rev. Charles Townend, a fine old parson, rector of Kingston-by-sea, who was intimate with Wordsworth and the rest of them, wrote this not very brilliant impromptu:

> 'They dwelt at the Lakes, an appropriate quarter
> For poems diluted with plenty of water'.

Again, highly as Coleridge esteemed the genius of his friend, yet he is reported to have expressed himself as follows:—'Wishing to avoid an undue regard to the high and genteel in society, Wordsworth had unreasonably attached himself to the low, so that he himself erred at last. He should have recollected that verse being the language of passion, and passion dictating energetic expressions, it became him to make his subject and style accord. One asks why tales so simple were not in prose. With malice prepense he fixes on objects of reflection which do not naturally excite it'. Sir Walter Scott and Southey, as we have seen, concur in very similar sentiments. Coleridge censured the disproportion in the machinery of the poem on 'The Gipsies', saying,—'Had the whole world been standing idle, more powerful argument to expose the evil could not have been brought forward'.

A correspondent wrote to Miss Wordsworth at a comparatively early period of her brother's career:—'I assure you that it gives me real pain when I think some future commentator may hereafter write:—"This great poet survived to the fifth decennary of the 19th century, but he appears to have died in the year 1814,

as far as life consisted in an active sympathy with the temporary welfare of his fellow creatures. He had written heroically and divinely against the tyranny of Napoleon, but was quite indifferent to all the successive tyrannies which disgraced the succeeding times"'. In answer to the common reproach that his sensibility was excited by objects which had no effect on others, we must remember that Wordsworth not only admitted the fact but was proud of it.

Barry Cornwall gives an account of his first meeting with the veteran poet at the chambers of a friend in the Temple, which, as it displays some personal characteristics, may fitly be introduced here. 'I have a vivid recollection of Wordsworth, who was a very grave man with strong features and a deep voice. I was a young versifier, and Wordsworth was just emerging out of a cloud of ignorant contumely into the sunrise of his fame. He was fond (perhaps too fond) of reciting his own poetry before friends and strangers. I was not attracted by his manner, which was almost too solemn, but I was deeply impressed by some of the weighty notes in his voice when he was delivering out his oracles. I forget whether it was 'Dion' or the beautiful poem of 'Laodamia' that he read, but I remembered the reading long afterwards, as one recollects the roll of spent thunder. I met Wordsworth occasionally afterwards, at Charles Lamb's, at Mr. Rogers's, and elsewhere, and he once did me the honour to call upon me. I remember that he had a very gentle aspect when he looked at my children. He took the hand of my dear daughter (who died lately), in his hand, and spoke some words to her, the recollection of which, perhaps, helped to incline her to poetry'.

Hazlitt says that Wordsworth's face, notwithstanding

his constitutional gravity, sometimes revealed indications of dry humour. And that once, at a morning visit, he heard him give an account of having breakfasted in company with Coleridge and allowed him to expatiate to the extent of his lungs. 'How could you permit him to go on and weary himself'? said Rogers, why you are to meet him at dinner this evening'. 'Yes', replied Wordsworth, 'I know that very well, but we like to take the sting out of him beforehand'. There is also much playful humour in the portrait which he has left of the popular divine of his day.

'Nor did the pulpit's oratory fail
To achieve the higher triumph. Not unfelt
Were its admonishments, nor lightly heard
The awful truths delivered thence by tongues,
Endowed with various powers to search the soul;
Yet ostentation, domineering, oft
Poured forth harangues, how sadly out of place! —
There have I seen a comely bachelor,
Fresh from a toilette of two hours, ascend
His rostrum, with seraphic glance look up,
And, in a tone elaborately low
Beginning, lead his voice through many a maze —
A minuet course; and winding up his mouth,
From time to time, into an orifice
Most delicate, a lurking eyelet small,
And only not invisible, again
Open it out, diffusing thence a smile
Of rapt irradiation, exquisite.
Meanwhile the Evangelists, Isaiah, Job,
Moses, and he who penned, the other day,
The death of Abel, Shakspeare, and the Bard
Whose genius spangled o'er a gloomy theme
With fancies thick as his inspiring stars,
And Ossian (doubt not 'tis the naked truth)
Summoned from streamy Morven — each and all
Would, in their turns, lend ornaments and flowers
To entwine the eloquence that helped

This pretty shepherd, pride of all the plains,
To rule and guide his captivated flock'.

The poet on one occasion even is said to have given utterance to a pun, and that it arose out of the circumstance of Mr. Quillinan's residence for a short time at the round house which disfigures Belle Isle on Windermere. Wordsworth, on visiting him, expressed a desire to have such a retreat. 'Oh!' said Quillinan, 'if I were to let Mr. Curwen know of your wish, I am sure he would lend it you for a few weeks'. 'In that case', replied the poet, 'we should call it a Borrow-me-an Island'. The Borromean Islands may have been in the mind of him who first christened it Belle Isle after Isola Bella. For there is near to it Lady Holme, answering to the Isola Madre — and as for the third, Isola del Pescatore, any of the neighbouring islets may answer to that in the angling season.

In 1824, Wordsworth resigned the office of Stamp Distributor, (then worth rather rather more than £500 a-year), in favour of his son William, who was appointed to it. Within a few months of this arrangement, he received a friendly and highly complimentary letter from Sir Robert Peel, proposing, with his sanction, to have his name placed on the Civil List for an annual pension of £300 to endure for his life, and considerately adding that his acceptance of this mark of favour from the Crown on the ground of eminent literary merit, would impose no restraint upon his perfect independence, and involve no obligations of a personal nature. Rendered doubly acceptable by these gracious assurances, the matter of the pension was speedily arranged.

Owing to advancing years and other circumstances,

the poetic faculty was now on the wane, and we consequently find that Wordsworth did not respond with any fresh effort, to an appeal received from friends in America who were exerting themselves for the abolition of slavery, and, in aid of that benevolent purpose, were about to publish selections from various authors in behalf of humanity. He merely replied that he had nothing bearing directly upon slavery, but proposed sending the little poem entitled the 'Westmorland Girl'. The verses were, however, not made use of on this occasion. Shortly after, his indignation being excited by the report of some dastardly conduct towards shipwrecked persons on the French coast, he felt impelled to write his 'Tribute to the memory of Grace Darling', thus placing in contrast the conduct of an Englishwoman and her relatives under like circumstances. It happened that nearly coincident with the appearance of this composition, a subscription, headed by the Queen and Queen Dowager, was set on foot towards the erection of a monument to record the heroism of this dauntless woman in inducing her father, the keeper of Longstone Lighthouse, to accompany her in the life-boat and aid in the rescue of part of the crew and passengers of the ill-fated steamer, Forfarshire, which was wrecked September 4, 1838, on the coast of Northumberland. Amongst his later productions may also be classed the well-known sonnet protesting against the intrusion of the Kendal and Windermere Railway into such sacred retreats, which brought down both animadversion and ridicule on its author. It was argued that he could no more pretend to 'retirement' than the Queen; having bartered it for fame.

There is, however, one invasion of his territory

chronicled by Dr. C. Wordsworth in the second volume of his 'Memoir', which was hailed with smiles of welcome by the poet. It occurred on the 8th of April, 1844—his 74th birthday, when Miss Fenwick, an intimate friend then living at Rydal, provided an entertainment for all neighbours of the humbler sort, young and old. Obedient to the summons, more than 300 children and 150 adults besieged the 'Mount'. The latter strengthening their nerves with tea within doors, while the children were regaled in the open air, each armed with his own mug, according to the fashion of the country on such occasions; many friends assisting the family and household to fill them, and to dispense the piles of currant cake, ginger-bread and oranges, and painted eggs, under whose weight the tables (though decorated with flowers and evergreens) of course, 'groaned'. Each detachment of juveniles, as soon as feasted, filed off to dance on the terrace in front of the house or to frolic among the bushes. Before disbanding, three hearty cheers were given for the poet, and the like for their entertainer, and the insurgents dispersed, thoroughly happy, and perhaps, if such a thing were possible with children at a feast, thoroughly tired. Lady Richardson thus concludes her 'reminiscences' of this Rising of the North. 'The gay scene at the Mount often comes before me as a pleasant dream. It is, perhaps, the only part of the island where such a reunion of all classes could have taken place without any connection of landlord and tenant, or any clerical relation, or school direction. Wordsworth, while looking at the gambols on the lawn, expressed his conviction that if such meetings could oftener take place between people of different conditions, a more friendly feeling would be created than

now exists in this country between rich and poor'.

Guided by such sentiments in his conduct towards dependents, Wordsworth gained the confidence and attachment of those whom he employed. We may instance especially, his man-servant or factotum, James, who, entering his service when a boy, continued at Rydal Mount until after his master's death.

Mention has been already made of the annual visit paid by Mr. H. C. Robinson to Rydal. So much did he add to the cheeriness of the season, that Mr. Quillinan used to say, in allusion to his name, 'No Crabb no Christmas'. Not willing to encroach inconveniently on the hospitality of the Wordsworths, he always insisted on sleeping in some neighbouring cottage, and the staircase in one of these being dark and crooked, he had the mishap to fall and sustain serious injury. During his illness he was carefully nursed by the faithful James, until he could be removed to the Mount for better accomodation. In an interesting letter to a friend, he writes:—'I must tell you something about James. He is 45 years of age, and is really a sort of model servant for a country situation like this, as he is very religious and moral as well as an excellent servant. He is a great favourite with the family, and will, I dare say, never leave them. He told me his history. He was brought up in a workhouse, and at 9 years of age was turned out of the house with two shillings in his pocket. When without a sixpence, he was picked up by a farmer, who took him into his service on condition that all his clothes should be burnt, and he was to pay for his new clothes out of his wages, £2 10s. per annum. Here he stayed as long as he was wanted. "I have been so lucky" said James, "that I was never out of place a day in my life, for I was always taken

into service immediately. I never got into a scrape, or was drunk in my life, for I never taste any liquor. So that I have often said I consider myself a favourite of fortune"!!—This is equal to Goldsmith's cripple in the park, who remarks of his own state—"'Tis not every man that can be born with a golden spoon in his mouth". But James has acquired his golden spoon. He has saved up £150 which he has invested in Railway shares. He can both read and write, plays on the accordion, sings, has a taste for drawing, paints Easter eggs with great taste, and is a very respectable tailor. "I never loved company", said James, "and I cannot be idle, so I am always doing something". He is not literate, for he seems hardly to know that he is in the service of a poet, though he must know something of song writing. When I took leave of him on this visit, I hung round his neck a silver watch. He was so surprised he was literally unable to thank me.' Yet this man who seemed struck dumb by a small shew of regard in return for faithful service rendered, could, when occasion called for it, speak admirably to the purpose, as we shall see hereafter.

The wreck of Southey's noble intellect, and Wordsworth's sorrowful visit to him, have already been referred to. After a long and afflicting illness came the deliverance which his friends could not but desire for him. He died on the 21st March, 1843, and on the 23rd Wordsworth repaired to Keswick to attend the remains of his friend to their last resting place. The Laureateship having thus become vacant, the appointment was conferred on Wordsworth, not, however, without some demur on his part, on the score of age, he being then in his 74th year. His scruples were removed by an assurance that the duties would be

merely nominal, and would in no way interfere with his repose and retirement. And in fact on no occasion does he appear to have been incited to use the laureate pen in honour of the Queen. In the 'Gentleman's Magazine' for 1850, however, we find it stated that 'once, and once only, did he sing in discharge of his office,—on the occasion of her Majesty's visit to the University of Cambridge'. It was a matter of regret with him that he did not take advantage of an opportunity which presented itself of paying a graceful tribute of respect to his royal mistress when, in the following year, he was detained on his homeward journey by the general excitement caused by the Queen's passing through Northampton on her way to Burleigh House. Had he first witnessed the wreaths of flowers which ornamented the humble cottages for mile upon mile of the route, instead of encountering the noise and tumult of a city, the inspiration might have come upon him.

Subsequently he repaired to London to pay his respects to her majesty on his appointment, and he describes the reception given him as most gracious. Mrs. Everett, the wife of the American Minister, who witnessed the scene, was moved to tears at the sight of the venerable silver-haired man kneeling to kiss the hand of the young sovereign.

In 1846, unknown to himself, the Laureate was put in nomination for the office of Rector of the University of Glasgow, a majority of 21 votes being recorded in his favour in opposition to the premier, Lord John Russell. Some peculiarity, however, in the forms of the election reversed the decision, so that the single vote of the sub-rector turned the scale in favour of Lord John Russell. Wordsworth was nevertheless

satisfied with the result, as affording a proof that literature, independent of office, was held in due estimation, for, with the exception of the poet Campbell, who was educated at the University, the choice had invariably fallen on men of rank and station. Considering the high honours which had been conferred on Wordsworth, he might well be indifferent in this instance, especially as the actual majority had declared so decidedly in his favour.

Very early in life he had a distaste for any thing like emulation, which he denounced as a 'horrid feeling; leading to vanity and envy'; and almost as soon as he had passed that season of his youth in which he confesses himself to have been 'wayward and moody', he began his independent career without any desire to compete with others. Reverting to his own college days, he somewhere says:—'I never engaged in the proper studies of the University, so that in these I had no temptation to envy any one, but I remember with pain that I had envious feelings when my fellow student in Italian got before me; I was his superior in many departments of mind but he was the better Italian scholar, and I envied him. The annoyance this gave me made me feel that emulation was dangerous for me, and made me very thankful that as a boy I never experienced it. Oh! one other time in my life I felt envy, it was when my brother was nearly certain of success in a foot-race with me and I tripped up his heels; this must have been envy'.

After his presentation at Court, and during his stay in London, he frequently met with Tennyson, whom he considered as decidedly the first of living poets, and expressed the hope that he would live to give to the world still better things. And though Wordsworth en-

tertained a conviction that Tennyson did not heartily sympathize with what he himself most valued in his works, namely the spirituality with which he had endeavoured to invest the material universe, and the moral relations under which it was his aim to exhibit the most ordinary appearances, yet it could not but be gratifying to receive, from the rising poet, an assurance expressed in the warmest terms, of the debt of gratitude which he owed to his works.

If it be the privilege of age to enjoy 'honour, love, obedience, and troops of friends', it is its penalty to witness the thinning of those friendly ranks, and to deplore the loss of those more tenderly allied; and Wordsworth now began to realize this. Lord Lonsdale, so great a benefactor to himself and to his children, was the first to pass away; then, after a short interval, he lost his only surviving brother, Dr. Wordsworth, for whom he had the warmest regard, and to whose disinterested conduct in resigning the mastership of Trinity College, Cambridge, he delighted to refer. Dr. Wordsworth had, with honour to himself and great benefit to the College, filled that post for twenty years, and relinquished it when in full vigour of mind, lest with advancing years his judgment might become impaired and unfit him for its important duties, without his being aware of it. In the copy of the poet's works which Dr. Wordsworth possessed, he wrote,—'In diction, in nature, in truth, in morals, in piety, does he not surpass all our writers'?

The only literary labour in which Wordsworth engaged at this time, was a futile endeavour to correct and improve some portions of the 'Excursion' with the execution of which he was not satisfied. The cloud now impending which cast its shadow over the

otherwise serene eventide of his life. The state of Mrs. Quillinan's health had of late been a frequent source of anxiety to the family, but it was hoped that a voyage, in which she had accompanied her husband to Lisbon, and subsequent travel in Portugal, had restored her strength: especially as her journal of this excursion, published anonymously, indicated nothing but health, high spirits, and enjoyment. The Reviews observing this, and recognizing the authoress, spoke in terms of welcome so high-flown as probably to cause pain where the reverse was intended. We quote a passage from the Quarterly.

'In a recent No. we paid our homage to the drama of Lusitania; we now invite the attention of our readers to its scenery and social life, as sketched for us in the journal of an accomplished artist: her pen light and ready, her pencil true and facile, and both equally obedient to the mistress mind. For the poetical and picturesque features of Portugal, our fair tourist came well prepared, a keen perception of the beautiful could not but be hereditary in the blood which rumour assigns to her; cradled in the bosom of beauty at Grasmere, reared at the knees of the *genius loci*, her memory ever recurs to the scenes of her youth; and whether she climbs the wild sierra, or fords the arrowy torrents of a foreign land, the scars and streams of Cumberland reappear clad in a southern garb: thus the enjoyment of the present is heightened by the poetry of the past, and Cintra itself becomes doubly delicious, because associated with the sweetest of English homes. . . . An unclouded ray of her own sunshine within, gilds every discomfort, which, trying on such a tour to the iron frame of man, is borne with unrepining patience by a woman — and this too, as she

gracefully says, "an invalid who had only left her native hills for a warmer climate, as a rain-vexed bird comes out from the wood to dry its feathers and take a strong flight home again". The balmy south has, we rejoice to infer, strengthened the plumage of this stricken dove; she has happily winged her way back to her Cumbrian nest, and cut down her feathers into excellent pens, as her lord, tired of war's alarms, seems to have previously moulded his sword into ploughshares. He too must accept our congratulations on his partner's convalescence'.

But these fond hopes were disappointed, as, shortly after the return to her native air, she rapidly declined; but her fine understanding retained its strength and refinement to the last. Her afflicted father, in reference to his bereavement, writes that 'towards the last she had much bodily suffering, under which she supported herself by prayer and gratitude to her heavenly Father for granting her to the last so many blessings'. 'We bear up', he adds, 'under our affliction, as well as God enables us to do. But oh! my dear friend, our loss is immeasurable. Our sorrow I feel is for life; but God's will be done'. She died on the 9th July, 1847, and was buried in Grasmere church-yard: the spot being marked by one of the simple memorials, grouped in that portion of the ground sacred to the poet and his relatives.

The father's sorrow was indeed 'for life'; his spirits never rallied after his great loss, the weakness of his bodily frame depriving him of the power of tranquil endurance; but bowed down by the weight of years he had not strength to bear this further burden, grief for a much-loved child. When himself in health and happiness, with what gentle sympathy he wrote of those in sorrow:—

'And if there be whose tender frames have drooped
Even to the dust, apparently through weight
Of anguish unrelieved, and lack of power
An agonizing sorrow to transmute,
Deem not that proof is here of hope withheld
When wanted most'.

A neighbour pictures him as spending the long winter evenings in grief and tears, neither he nor his wife being able to read by night, nor would his habit of mind allow of his finding any alleviation from the ordinary amusements in which other men engage. One who witnessed this extreme depression of the poet, expressed his regret to James Dixon, the faithful servant whom Wordsworth did not hesitate to call his friend. James replied, 'Its very sad, sir; he was moaning about her, and said, "Oh! but she was such a bright creature"; and then I said, "but don't you think, sir, she is brighter now than ever she was"? and then master burst into tears'.

Amongst the throng of tourists who visited Rydal Mount, whether impelled by reverence for genius, or by mere curiosity, or fashion, not a few would enquire for the small cottage on the banks of Rydal Water where De Quincey dwelt for awhile, drugged with opium, and nightly shuddering at the expectation of what those dread, dim hours might bring forth, yet so fascinated by habit that he continued to court the approach of those marvellous and bewildering dreams. Here Hartley Coleridge afterwards resided, a fortunate retreat for one so thriftless, as it enabled his kind friends, the Wordsworths, to watch over him, and often with unseen hand to minister to his comfort. His habits were most singular and erratic, and he maintained through life the simplicity of a child, and all the fresh-

ness of sympathy pertaining to childhood. When he was only six years old, Wordsworth addressed to him these prescient lines—

> 'Nature will either end thee quite
> Or lengthening out thy season of delight,
> Preserve for thee, by individual right,
> A young lamb's heart, amid the full-grown flocks'.

His exquisite sensibility was tempered by a refined taste, a cultivated judgment, and a chaste imagination. He shone as poet, critic, and humourist. But while his great talents and amiable qualities secured for him the regard of all with whom he associated, his weaknesses and irregularities were a source of anxiety to those who loved him most. Widespread was the sorrow when the news of his dangerous illness was speedily followed by that of his death. Wordsworth, who admired while he reproved him, followed him to the spot he had selected for him, saying, 'let him lie near us: he would have wished it'; and then, contemplating the recently-opened graves at his feet, he added, 'keep the ground for us, we are old and it cannot be for long'. Melancholy, but natural presage, soon to be fulfilled.

In the month of March, 1850, the poet, still maintaining much of his wonted activity, took some lengthened walks. He was too lightly clad to resist the chill of the unruly winds, so proverbially keen at that season of the year. The friends on whom he called during these rambles observed with regret that he seemed unusually feeble. But this did not prevent him from taking a long round on the following day, and towards evening he imprudently sat in the stone porch of a cottage at White Moss to observe the setting sun,

a sharp east wind blowing at the time. On reaching home he felt unwell, and retired early to rest. His illness continuing, medical aid was sought, but exhaustion and lethargy ensued.

On Sunday, April 7, 1850, when he completed his 80th year, he was lying in so prostrated a condition that prayers were offered up for him in Rydal Church, where for so many years his venerable head had bowed in worship. In a state hovering between life and death, he continued for some days, when he awoke as from a quiet sleep. The last word he was heard to utter was the name of his beloved daughter. On the 23rd of April he calmly breathed his last, and on the 27th, followed by his sorrowing relatives, and a vast concourse from the neigbourhood, his mortal remains were deposited in Grasmere church-yard.

> 'A hallowed spot
> Nestled among its trees, that let in gleams
> And holy glimmerings on the lonesome turf,
> Touching with pensive light the gentle tombs.
> And soothing voices breathe around us here,
> That whisper of Eternal Love to Peace,
> That whisper of Eternal Peace to Love.
> Here tender hearts should rest: and hither they,
> Who fain would win such tenderness, should come,
> And meditating lone, amidst the dead
> Feel their pure presence'.

Those who are not familar with the poetry of Wordsworth, may form some idea of its excellence from a perusal of the selection contained in the following pages, and after a closer study of his writings in a more complete form, may be ready to endorse the opinion expressed by one well able to pronounce, that 'he has achieved a great, a high, a holy work, the value of which is not to be measured by its success, but by its truth'.

EXTRACTS FROM THE 'EXCURSION'.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1814.

THE Title-page announces that this is only a portion of a poem; and the Reader must be here apprised that it belongs to the second part of a long and laborious Work, which is to consist of three parts.— The Author will candidly acknowledge that, if the first of these had been completed, and in such a manner as to satisfy his own mind, he should have preferred the natural order of publication, and have given that to the world first; but, as the second division of the Work was designed to refer more to passing events, and to an existing state of things, than the others were meant to do, more continuous exertion was naturally bestowed upon it, and greater progress made here than in the rest of the poem; and as this part does not depend upon the preceding, to a degree which will materially injure its own peculiar interest, the Author, complying with the earnest entreaties of some valued Friends, presents the following pages to the Public.

It may be proper to state whence the poem, of which The EXCURSION is a part, derives its Title of THE RECLUSE.— Several years ago, when the Author retired to his native mountains, with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary Work that might live,

it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind, and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record, in verse, the origin and progress of his own powers, as far as he was acquainted with them. That Work, addressed to a dear Friend, most distinguished for his knowledge and genius, and to whom the Author's Intellect is deeply indebted, has been long finished; and the result of the investigation which gave rise to it was a determination to compose a philosophical poem, containing views of Man, Nature, and Society; and to be entitled, the Recluse; as having for its principal subject the sensations and opinions of a poet living in retirement.—The preparatory poem is biographical, and conducts the history of the Author's mind to the point when he was emboldened to hope that his faculties were sufficiently matured for entering upon the arduous labour which he had proposed to himself; and the two works have the same kind of relation to each other, if he may so express himself, as the ante-chapel has to the body of a Gothic church. Continuing this allusion, he may be permitted to add, that his minor pieces, which have been long before the public, when they shall be properly arranged, will be found by the attentive reader to have such connection with the main work as may give them claim to be likened to the little cells, oratories, and sepulchral recesses, ordinarily included in those edifices.

The Author would not have deemed himself justified in saying, upon this occasion, so much of performances either finished, or unpublished, if he had not thought that the labour bestowed by him upon what he has heretofore and now laid before the public, entitled him

to candid attention for such a statement as he thinks necessary to throw light upon his endeavours to please, and, he would hope, to benefit his countrymen. Nothing further need be added than that the first and third parts of 'The Recluse' will consist chiefly of meditations in the author's own person; and that in the intermediate part ('The Excursion') the intervention of characters speaking is employed, and something of a dramatic form adopted.

It is not the Author's intention formally to announce a system: it was more animating to him to proceed in a different course; and if he shall succeed in conveying to the mind clear thoughts, lively images, and strong feelings, the reader will have no difficulty in extracting the system for himself.

BOOK I.

THE WANDERER.

A summer forenoon — The Author reaches a ruined cottage upon a common, and there meets with a revered friend, the Wanderer, of whom he gives an account. — The Wanderer, while resting under the shade of the trees that surround the cottage, relates the history of its last inhabitant.

'Twas summer, and the sun had mounted high:
Southward, the landscape indistinctly glared
Through a pale steam; but all the northern downs,
In clearest air ascending, show'd far off
A surface dappled o'er with shadows, flung
From many a brooding cloud; far as the sight

Could reach, those many shadows lay in spots
Determined and unmoved, with steady beams
Of bright and pleasant sunshine interposed;
Pleasant to him who on the soft cool moss
Extends his careless limbs along the front
Of some huge cave, whose rocky ceiling casts
A twilight of its own, an ample shade,
Where the wren warbles; while the dreaming man,
Half conscious of the soothing melody,
With silent eye looks out upon the scene,
By that impending covert made more soft,
More low and distant! Other lot was mine;
Yet with good hope that soon I should obtain
As grateful resting-place, and livelier joy.
Across a bare wide common I was toiling
With languid feet, which by the slippery ground
Were baffled; nor could my weak arm disperse
The host of insects gathering round my face,
And ever with me as I paced along.

Upon that open level stood a grove,
The wish'd-for port to which my steps were bound.
Thither I came, and there — amid the gloom
Spread by a brotherhood of lofty elms —
Appear'd a roofless hut; four naked walls
That stared upon each other! I look'd round,
And to my wish and to my hope espied
Him whom I sought; a man of reverend age,
But stout and hale, for travel unimpaired.
There was he seen upon the cottage-bench,
Recumbent in the shade, as if asleep;
An iron-pointed staff lay at his side.

Here follows a description of the poet's early acquaintance with the old man whose natural eloquence and dignity of demeanour he extols. The poem then proceeds:—

O many are the poets that are sown
By nature! men endowed with highest gifts —
The vision, and the faculty divine —

Yet wanting the accomplishment of verse
(Which in the docile season of their youth
It was denied them to acquire, through lack
Of culture and the inspiring aid of books;
Or haply by a temper too severe;
Or a nice backwardness afraid of shame),
Nor having e'er, as life advanced, been led
By circumstance to take unto the height
The measure of themselves, these favour'd Beings,
All but a scatter'd few, live out their time,
Husbanding that which they possess within,
And go to the grave unthought of. Strongest minds
Are often those of whom the noisy world
Hears least; else surely this man had not left
His graces unreveal'd and unproclaim'd.
But, as the mind was fill'd with inward light,
So not without distinction had he lived,
Beloved and honour'd — far as he was known.
And some small portion of his eloquent speech,
And something that may serve to set in view
The feeling pleasures of his loneliness,
His observations, and the thoughts his mind
Had dealt with — I will here record in verse;
Which, if with truth it correspond, and sink
Or rise, as venerable Nature leads,
The high and tender Muses shall accept
With gracious smile, deliberately pleased,
And listening Time reward with sacred praise.

The history of the Wanderer is then traced from childhood when he was employed as beseemed one of the numerous progeny of a small Scotch farmer, having the advantage of schooling only during the winter months. The small supply of books from the minister's shelf was read, and read again; and his mind was stored with traditions cleaving to the mountains, and legends which peopled the dark woods and dreary caves.

But he had felt the power
Of Nature, and already was prepared

By his intense conceptions, to receive
Deeply the lesson deep of love which he
Whom Nature, by whatever means, has taught
To feel intensely, cannot but receive.

From early childhood, even as hath been said,
From his sixth year, he had been sent abroad
In summer to tend herds: such was his task
Thenceforward till the later day of youth.
O then what soul was his, when, on the tops
Of the high mountains, he beheld the sun
Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He look'd —
Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth
And ocean's liquid mass, beneath him lay
In gladness and deep joy. The clouds were touch'd,
And in their silent faces did he read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form
All melted into him; they swallow'd up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live: they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffer'd no request;
Rapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
That made him; it was blessedness and love!

A herdsman on the lonely mountain-tops,
Such intercourse was his, and in this sort
Was his existence oftentimes *possess'd*.
Oh! then how beautiful, how bright, appear'd
The written Promise. Early had he learn'd
To reverence the Volume that displays
The mystery — the life which cannot die:
But in the mountains did he *feel* his faith;
There did he see the writing — all things there

Breathed immortality, revolving life,
And greatness still revolving; infinite:
There littleness was not; the least of things
Seem'd infinite; and there his spirit shaped
Her prospects, nor did he believe,—he *saw*.
What wonder if his being thus became
Sublime and comprehensive? Low desires,
Low thoughts had there no place; yet was his heart
Lowly; for he was meek in gratitude,
Oft has he call'd those ecstasies to mind,
And whence they flow'd: and from them he acquired
Wisdom, which works through patience; thence he learn'd,
In many a calmer hour of sober thought,
To look on Nature with a humble heart,
Self-question'd where it did not understand,
And with a superstitious eye of love.

So pass'd the time; yet to the nearest town
He duly went with what small overplus
His earnings might supply, and brought away
The book that most had tempted his desires
While at the stall he read. Among the hills
He gazed upon that mighty orb of song
The divine Milton. Lore of different kind,
The annual savings of a toilsome life,
His stepfather supplied; books that explain
The purer elements of truth involved
In lines and numbers, and, by charm severe
(Especially perceived where nature droops
And feeling is suppress'd), preserve the mind
Busy in solitude and poverty.

. . . . . .

But, from past liberty, and tried restraints,
He now was summon'd to select the course
Of humble industry that promised best
To yield him no unworthy maintenance.
The mother strove to make her son perceive

With what advantage he might teach a school
In the adjoining village ; but the youth,
Who of this service made a short essay,
Found that the wanderings of his thoughts were then
A misery to him ; that he must resign
A task he was unable to perform.

That stern yet kindly Spirit who constrains
The Savoyard to quit his naked rocks,
The free-born Swiss to leave his narrow vales
(Spirit attach'd to regions mountainous
Like their own steadfast clouds) — did now impel
His restless mind to look abroad with hope.
An irksome drudgery seems it to plod on,
Through dusty ways, in storm, from door to door,
A vagrant merchant bent beneath his load !
Yet do such travellers find their own delight ;
And their hard service, deem'd debasing now,
Gain'd merited respect in simpler times,
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt
In rustic sequestration, — all dependent
Upon the Pedlar's toil — supplied their wants,
Or pleased their fancies, with the wares he brought.
Not ignorant was the youth that still no few
Of his adventurous countrymen were led
By perseverance in this track of life
To competence and ease ; to him it bore
Attractions manifold — and this he chose.
He ask'd his mother's blessing ; and with tears
Thanking his second father, ask'd from him
Paternal blessings. The good pair bestow'd
Their farewell benediction, but with hearts
Foreboding evil. From his native hills
He wander'd far : much did he see of men,
Their manners, their enjoyments, and pursuits,
Their passions, and their feelings ; chiefly those
Essential and eternal in the heart,
Which 'mid the simpler forms of rural life,
Exist more simple in their elements,

And speak a plainer language. In the woods,
A lone enthusiast, and among the fields,
Itinerant in this labour, he had pass'd
The better portion of his time; and there
Spontaneously had his affections thriven
Upon the bounties of the year, and felt
The liberty of Nature; there he kept
In solitude and solitary thought
His mind in a just equipoise of love.
Serene it was, unclouded by the cares
Of ordinary life; unvex'd, unwarp'd
By partial bondage. In his steady course,
No piteous revolutions had he felt,
No wild varieties of joy and grief.
Unoccupied by sorrow of its own,
His heart lay open; and, by Nature tuned
And constant disposition of his thoughts
To sympathy with man, he was alive
To all that was enjoy'd where'er he went;
And all that was endured; for in himself
Happy, and quiet in his cheerfulness,
He had no painful pressure from without
That made him turn aside from wretchedness
With coward fears. He could *afford* to suffer
With those whom he saw suffer. Hence it came
That in our best experience he was rich.

. . . . . .

The Scottish Church, both on himself and those
With whom from childhood he grew up, had held
The strong hand of her purity; and still
Had watch'd him with an unrelenting eye.
This he remember'd in his riper age
With gratitude, and reverential thoughts.
But by the native vigour of his mind,
By his habitual wanderings out of doors,
By loneliness, and goodness, and kind works,
Whate'er, in docile childhood or in youth,
He had imbibed of fear or darker thought,

Was melted all away: so true was this,
That sometimes his religion seem'd to me
Self-taught, as of a dreamer in the woods;
Who to the model of his own pure heart
Framed his belief, as grace divine inspired,
Or human reason dictated with awe.
— And surely never did there live on earth
A man of kindlier nature. The rough sports
And teasing ways of children vex'd not him;
Nor did he bid them from his presence, tired
With questions and importunate demand.
Indulgent listener was he to the tongue
Of garrulous age; nor did the sick man's tale,
To his fraternal sympathy address'd,
Obtain reluctant hearing.

Plain his garb;
Such as might suit a rustic Sire, prepared
For sabbath duties: yet he was a man
Whom no one could have pass'd without remark.
Active and nervous was his gait; his limbs
And his whole figure breathed intelligence.

Such was the friend whom the author meets by appointment to join in an excursion. Being parched with thirst, he enquires of his companion where he may slake it.

He, at the word,
Pointing towards a sweet-briar, bade me climb
The fence hard by, where that aspiring shrub
Look'd out upon the road. It was a plot
Of garden-ground run wild, its matted weeds
Mark'd with the steps of those, whom, as they pass'd,
The gooseberry-trees that shot in long lank slips,
Or currants hanging from their leafless stems
In scanty strings, had tempted to o'erleap
The broken wall. I look'd around, and there,
Where two tall hedge-rows of thick alder boughs
Join'd in a cold damp nook, espied a well

Shrouded with willow-flowers and plumy fern.
My thirst I slaked, and, from the cheerless spot
Withdrawing, straightway to the shade return'd
Where sate the old man on the cottage bench ;
And while, beside him, with uncover'd head,
I yet was standing, freely to respire,
And cool my temples in the fanning air,
Thus did he speak : — ' I see around me here
Things which you cannot see : we die, my friend,
Nor we alone, but that which each man loved
And prized in his peculiar nook of earth,
Dies with him, or is changed ; and very soon
Even of the good is no memorial left.
The poets, in their elegies and songs
Lamenting the departed, call the groves,
They call upon the hills and streams to mourn.
And senseless rocks ; nor idly — for they speak,
In these their invocations, with a voice
Obedient to the strong creative power
Of human passion. Sympathies there are
More tranquil, yet perhaps of kindred birth,
That steal upon the meditative mind,
And grow with thought. Beside yon spring I stood,
And eyed its waters till we seem'd to feel
One sadness, they and I. For them a bond
Of brotherhood is broken : time has been
When, every day, the touch of human hand
Dislodged the natural sleep that binds them up
In mortal stillness ; and they minister'd
To human comfort. As I stoop'd to drink,
Upon the slimy foot-stone I espied
The useless fragment of a wooden bowl,
Green with the moss of years ; a pensive sight
That moved my heart, recalling former days,
When I could never pass that road but she
Who lived within these walls, at my approach,
A daughter's welcome gave me, and I loved her
As my own child. O sir ! the good die first,
And they whose hearts are dry as summer dust
Burn to the socket. Many a passenger

Hath bless'd poor Margaret for her gentle looks,
When she upheld the cool refreshment drawn
From that forsaken spring; and no one came
But he was welcome; no one went away
But that it seem'd she loved him. She is dead,
The light extinguish'd of her lonely hut,
The hut itself abandon'd to decay,
And she forgotten in the quiet grave!

'I speak,' continued he, 'of one whose stock
Of virtues bloom'd beneath this lowly roof.
She was a woman of a steady mind,
Tender and deep in her excess of love,
Not speaking much, pleased rather with the joy
Of her own thoughts: by some especial care
Her temper had been framed, as if to make
A Being, who, by adding love to peace,
Might live on earth a life of happiness.
Her wedded partner lack'd not on his side
The humble worth that satisfied her heart;
Frugal, affectionate, sober, and withal
Keenly industrious. She with pride would tell
That he was often seated at his loom,
In summer, ere the mower was abroad
Among the dewy grass,— in early spring,
Ere the last star had vanish'd. They who pass'd
At evening, from behind the garden fence
Might hear his busy spade, which he would ply,
After his daily work, until the light
Had fail'd, and every leaf and flower were lost
In the dark hedges. So their days were spent
In peace and comfort; and a pretty boy
Was their best hope,— next to the God in heaven.

A sad reverse to this happy picture follows; two blighting seasons, when the fields were left without a harvest. A time of universal distress and trouble ensued. The pedlar, returning from a country far remote, again seeks this cottage.

'Having reach'd the door,

I knock'd; and when I enter'd with the hope
Of usual greeting, Margaret look'd at me
A little while; then turn'd her head away
Speechless; and, sitting down upon a chair,
Wept bitterly. I wist not what to do,
Or how to speak to her. Poor wretch! at last
She rose from off her seat, and then,— O, sir--
I cannot *tell* how she pronounced my name.
With fervent love, and with a face of grief
Unutterably helpless, and a look
That seem'd to cling upon me, she inquired
If I had seen her husband. As she spake,
A strange surprise and fear came to my heart,
Nor had I power to answer ere she told
That he had disappear'd — not two months gone.
He left his house: two wretched days had pass'd,
And on the third, as wistfully she raised
Her head from off her pillow, to look forth,
Like one in trouble, for returning light,
Within her chamber casement she espied
A folded paper, lying as if placed
To meet her waking eyes. This tremblingly
She open'd — found no writing, but therein
Pieces of money carefully inclosed,
Silver and gold — "I shudder'd at the sight,"
Said Margaret, "for I knew it was his hand
Which placed it there; and, ere that day was ended,
That long and anxious day! I learn'd from one
Sent hither by my husband to impart
The heavy news, that he had join'd a troop
Of soldiers, going to a distant land.
— He left me thus — he could not gather heart
To take a farewell of me; for he fear'd
That I should follow with my babes, and sink
Beneath the misery of that wandering life."

Comforting the forlorn woman with words of consolation and hope, the Pedlar departs to roam over hill and dale with his accustomed load, not returning till the wane of summer. Arriving at Margaret's door he

finds her absent. Whilst waiting long for her return, he notices the unclipt honeysuckle hanging in heavy tufts over the porch, and that the garden had lost its pride of neatness.

'The sun was sinking in the west; and now
I sate with sad impatience. From within
Her solitary infant cried aloud,
Then, like a blast that dies away self-still'd,
The voice was silent. From the bench I rose?
But neither could divert nor soothe my thoughts.
The spot, though fair, was very desolate —
The longer I remain'd, more desolate:
And, looking round, I saw the corner stones
Till then unnoticed, on either side the door
With dull red stains discolour'd, and stuck o'er
With tufts and hairs of wool, as if the sheep,
That fed upon the common, thither came
Familiarly; and found a couching-place
Even at her threshold. Deeper shadows fell
From these tall elms; the cottage-clock struck eight; —
I turn'd, and saw her distant a few steps.
Her face was pale and thin, her figure too
Was changed. As she unlock'd the door, she said,
"It grieves me you have waited here so long,
But, in good truth, I've wander'd much of late,
And, sometimes — to my shame I speak — have need
Of my best prayers to bring me back again."
While on the board she spread our evening meal,
She told me — interrupting not the work
Which gave employment to her listless hands —
That she had parted with her elder child,
To a kind master on a distant farm
Now happily apprenticed — "I perceive
You look at me, and you have cause; to-day
I have been travelling far; and many days
About the fields I wander, knowing this
Only, that what I seek I cannot find;
And so I waste my time: for I am changed;
And to myself," said she, "have done much wrong

And to this helpless infant. I have slept
Weeping, and weeping have I waked; my tears
Have flow'd as if my body were not such
As others are; and I could never die.
But I am now in mind and in my heart
More easy; and I hope," said she, "that Heaven
Will give me patience to endure the things
Which I behold at home." It would have grieved
Your very soul to see her; Sir, I feel
The story linger in my heart: I fear
'Tis long and tedious; but my spirit clings
To that poor woman: so familiarly
Do I perceive her manner, and her look,
And presence; and so deeply do I feel
Her goodness, that, not seldom, in my walks
A momentary trance comes over me;
And to myself I seem to muse on One
By sorrow laid asleep, or borne away;
A human being destined to awake
To human life, or something very near
To human life, when he shall come again
For whom she suffer'd. Yes, it would have grieved
Your very soul to see her: evermore
Her eyelids droop'd, her eyes were downward cast;
And, when she at her table gave me food,
She did not look at me. Her voice was low,
Her body was subdued. In every act
Pertaining to her house affairs, appear'd
The careless stillness of a thinking mind
Self-occupied; to which all outward things
Are like an idle matter. Still she sigh'd,
But yet no motion of the breast was seen,
No heaving of the heart. While by the fire
We sate together, sighs came on my ear,
I knew not how, and hardly whence they came.

'Ere my departure to her care I gave,
For her son's use, some tokens of regard,
Which with a look of welcome she received;
And I exhorted her to have her trust

In God's good love, and seek his help by prayer.
I took my staff, and when I kiss'd her babe,
The tears stood in her eyes. I left her then
With the best hope and comfort I could give.
She thank'd me for my wish; but for my hope
It seem'd she did not thank me.

'I returned,
And took my rounds along this road again
Ere on its sunny bank the primrose flower
Peep'd forth, to give an earnest of the spring.
I found her sad and drooping; she had learn'd
No tidings of her husband; if he lived,
She knew not that he lived; if he were dead,
She knew not he was dead. She seem'd the same
In person and appearance; but her house
Bespake a sleepy hand of negligence.
The floor was neither dry nor neat, the hearth
Was comfortless, and her small lot of books,
Which in the cottage window, heretofore
Had been piled up against the corner panes
In seemly order, now, with straggling leaves
Lay scatter'd here and there, open or shut
As they had chanced to fall. Her infant babe
Had from its mother caught the trick of grief
And sighed among its playthings. Once again
I turn'd towards the garden gate, and saw,
More plainly still, that poverty and grief
Were now come nearer to her: weeds defaced
The harden'd soil, and knots of wither'd grass;
No ridges there appear'd of clear black mould,
No winter greenness; of her herbs and flowers,
It seem'd the better part were gnaw'd away
Or trampled into earth; a chain of straw,
Which had been twined about the tender stem
Of a young apple-tree, lay at its root;
The bark was nibbled round by truant sheep.
— Margaret stood near, her infant in her arms,
And, noting that my eye was on the tree,
She said, "I fear it will be dead and gone

Ere Robert come again." Towards the house
Together we return'd, and she inquired
If I had any hope: — but for her babe,
And for her little orphan boy, she said,
She had no wish to live — that she must die
Of sorrow. Yet I saw the idle loom
Still in its place; his Sunday garments hung
Upon the self-same nail; his very staff
Stood undisturb'd behind the door. And when,
In bleak December, I retraced this way,
She told me that her little babe was dead,
And she was left alone. She now, released
From her maternal cares, had taken up
The employment common through these wilds, and gain'd
By spinning hemp a pittance for herself;
And for this end had hired a neighbour's boy
To give her needful help. That very time
Most willingly she put her work aside
And walk'd with me along the miry road
Heedless how far; and, in such piteous sort
That any heart had ached to hear her, begg'd
That, wheresoe'er I went, I still would ask
For him whom she had lost. We parted then —
Our final parting; for from that time forth
Did many seasons pass ere I return'd
Into this tract again.

The painful narrative prolongs: the unhappy Margaret's sore heart wasting for nine tedious years, during which period she enquires of every passer-by, for news of her husband. Meanwhile neglect and decay increase in and around the miserable hut.

'Yet still
She loved this wretched spot, nor would for worlds
Have parted hence: and still that length of road,
And this rude bench, one torturing hope endear'd,
Fast rooted at her heart: and here, my friend,—
In sickness she remain'd; and here she died,

Last human tenant of these ruin d walls!'

. . . . . .

He ceased. Ere long the sun declining shot
A slant and mellow radiance, which began
To fall upon us, while beneath the trees,
We sate on that low bench: and now we felt,
Admonish'd thus, the sweet hour coming on.
A linnet warbled from those lofty elms,
A thrush sang loud, and other melodies,
At distance heard, peopled the milder air.
The old man rose, and, with a sprightly mien
Of hopeful preparation, grasp'd his staff;
Together casting then a farewell look
Upon those silent walls, we left the shade;
And, ere the stars were visible, had reach'd
A village inn,—our evening resting-place.

BOOK II.

In days of yore, how fortunately fared
The minstrel! wandering on from hall to hall,
Baronial court or royal; cheer'd with gifts
Munificent, and love, and ladies' praise;
Now meeting on his road an armed knight,
Now resting with a pilgrim by the side
Of a clear brook; beneath an abbey's roof
One evening sumptuously lodged; the next
Humbly in a religious hospital;
Or with some merry outlaws of the wood;
Or haply shrouded in a hermit's cell.
Him, sleeping or awake, the robber spared;
He walk'd protected from the sword of war,

By virtue of that sacred instrument,
His harp, suspended at the traveller's side :
His dear companion wheresoe'er he went,
Opening from land to land an easy way
By melody, and by the charm of verse.
Yet not the noblest of that honour'd race
Drew happier, loftier, more impassion'd thoughts
From his long journeyings and eventful life,
Than this obscure Itinerant (an obscure
But a high-soul'd and tender-hearted man)
Had skill to draw from many a ramble, far
And wide protracted through the tamer ground
Of these our unimaginative days ;
Both while he trod the earth in humblest guise
Accoutred with his burthen and his staff ;
And now, when free to move with lighter pace.

What wonder, then, if I, whose favourite school
Hath been the field, the roads, and rural lanes,
Look'd on this guide with reverential love !
Each with the other pleased, we now pursued
Our journey — beneath favourable skies.
Turn wheresoe'er we would, he was a light
Unfailing : not a hamlet could we pass,
Rarely a house, which did not yield to him
Remembrances ; or from his tongue call forth
Some way-beguiling tale. Nor less regard
Accompanied those strains of apt discourse,
Which Nature's various objects might supply ;
And in the silence of his face I read
His overflowing spirit.

. . . . . .

The wealthy, the luxurious, by the stress
Of business roused, or pleasure, ere their time,
May roll in chariots, or provoke the hoofs
Of the fleet coursers they bestride, to raise
From earth the dust of morning, slow to rise ;
And they, if blest with health and hearts at ease,

Should lack not their enjoyment: but how faint
Compared with ours, who, pacing side by side,
Could, with an eye of leisure, look on all
That we beheld; and lend the listening sense
To every grateful sound of earth and air—
Pausing at will; our spirits braced, our thoughts
Pleasant as roses in the thickets blown,
And pure as dew bathing their crimson leaves.

Attracted by the sound of pipe and tabor, and the sight of rustic sports, the author proposes to halt and witness the village wakes, but his companion urges their onward journey, promising to introduce him to a friend and fellow-countryman of his, whom they would find living in seclusion in a lonely spot among the mountains. He had been an army chaplain, living gaily, more like a soldier among soldiers, than as a pastor with his flock; fortune, however, throwing in his way a fair damsel, rich in mental endowments as in worldly fortune, he relinquished his sacred office and retired with his youthful bride to a rural home. With further account of his fitful career, and other discourse, the way is beguiled as they proceed up a wide vale.

Now, suddenly diverging, he began
To climb, upon its western side, a ridge,
Pathless and smooth, a long and steep ascent;
As if the object of his quest had been
Some secret of the mountains, cavern, fall
Of water, or some boastful eminence
Renown'd for splendid prospect far and wide.
We clomb without a track to guide our steps,
And, on the summit, reach'd a dreary plain,
With a tumultuous waste of huge hill-tops
Before us; savage region! and I walk'd
In weariness; when, all at once, behold!
Beneath our feet, a little lowly vale,
A lowly vale, and yet uplifted high
Among the mountains; even as if the spot
Had been, from eldest time, by wish of theirs
So placed,—to be shut out from all the world!

Urn-like it was in shape, deep as an urn;
With rocks encompass'd, save that to the south
Was one small opening, where a heath-clad ridge
Supplied a boundary less abrupt and close.
A quiet treeless nook, with two green fields,
A liquid pool, that glitter'd in the sun,
And one bare dwelling; one abode, no more!
It seem'd the home of poverty and toil,
Though not of want: the little fields, made green
By husbandry of many thrifty years,
Paid cheerful tribute to the moorland house.
There crows the cock, single in his domain:
The small birds find in spring no thicket there
To shroud them; only from the neighbouring vales
The cuckoo, straggling up to the hill tops,
Shouteth faint tidings of some gladder place.

'Ah! what a sweet recess,' thought I, 'is here!'
Instantly throwing down my limbs at ease
Upon a bed of heath — 'full many a spot
Of hidden beauty have I chanced t' espy
Among the mountains; never one like this;
So lonesome, and so perfectly secure:
Not melancholy — no, for it is green,
And bright, and fertile, furnish'd in itself
With the few needful things that life requires.
In rugged arms how soft it seems to lie,
How tenderly protected! Far and near
We have an image of the pristine earth,
The planet in its nakedness; were this
Man's only dwelling, sole appointed seat,
First, last, and single, in the breathing world,
It could not be more quiet: peace is here
Or nowhere; days unruffled by the gale
Of public news or private; years that pass
Forgetfully; uncall'd upon to pay
The common penalties of mortal life,
Sickness, or accident, or grief, or pain.'

On these and other kindred thoughts intent,

In silence by my comrade's side I lay,
He also silent: when from out the heart
Of that profound abyss, a solemn voice,
Or several voices in one solemn sound
Was heard ascending; mournful, deep, and slow
The cadence, as of psalms — a funeral dirge!
We listen'd, looking down towards the hut,
But seeing no one: meanwhile from below
The strain continued, spiritual as before;
And now distinctly could I recognize
These words:—"*Shall in the grave thy love be known,*
In death thy faithfulness?" 'God rest his soul!'
The Wand'rer cried, abruptly breaking silence;
'He is departed, and finds peace at last!'

This scarcely spoken, and those holy strains
Not ceasing, forth appear'd in view a band
Of rustic persons from behind the hut,
Bearing a coffin in the midst, with which
They shaped their course along the sloping side
Of that small valley, singing as they moved;
A sober company and few, the men
Bareheaded, and all decently attired.
Some steps when they had thus advanced, the dirge
Ended; and, from the stillness that ensued
Recovering, to my friend I said, 'You spake,
Methought, with apprehension that these rites
Are paid to him upon whose shy retreat
This day we purposed to intrude.' 'I did so;
But let us hence, that we may learn the truth.'

. . . . . .

So speaking, on he went, and at the word
I follow'd, till he made a sudden stand;
For full in view, approaching through the gate,
That open'd from the inclosure of green fields
Into the rough uncultivated ground,
Behold the man whom he had fancied dead!
I knew, from the appearance and the dress

That it could be no other: a pale face,
A tall and meagre person, in a garb
Not rustic,—dull and faded like himself!
He saw us not, though distant but few steps;
For he was busy dealing from a store,
Which on a leaf he carried in his hand,
Strings of ripe currants; gift by which he strove,
With intermixture of endearing words,
To soothe a child who walk'd beside him, weeping
As if disconsolate. 'They to the grave
Are bearing him, my little one,' he said --
'To the dark pit, but he will feel no pain;
His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.'

Glad was my comrade now, though he at first,
I doubt not, had been more surprised than glad.
But now, recover'd from the shock, and calm,
He soberly advanced, and to the man
Gave cordial greeting. Vivid was the light
Which flash'd at this from out the other's eyes;
He was all fire: the sickness from his face
Pass'd like a fancy that is swept away.
Hands join'd he with his visitant,—a grasp,
An eager grasp; and, many moments' space,
When the first glow of pleasure was no more,
And much of what had vanish'd was return'd,
An amicable smile retain'd the life,
Which it had unexpectedly received,
Upon his hollow cheek. 'How kind,' he said:
'Nor could your coming have been better timed;
For this, you see, is in our narrow world
A day of sorrow. I have here a charge'—
And, speaking thus, he patted tenderly
The sunburnt forehead of the weeping child—
'A little mourner, whom it is my task
To comfort; but how came ye? If yon track
(Which doth at once befriend us and betray)
Conducted hither your most welcome feet,
Ye could not miss the funeral train; they yet
Have scarcely disappear'd.' 'This blooming child,'

Said the old man, 'is of an age to weep
At any grave or solemn spectacle;
Inly distress'd, or overpower'd with awe,
He knows not why; but he, perchance, this day
Is shedding orphan's tears; and you yourself
Must have sustain'd a loss.' 'The hand of Death,'
He answer'd, 'has been here; but could not well
Have fallen more lightly, if it had not fallen
Upon myself.' The other left these words
Unnoticed, thus continuing:—

'From yon crag,
Down whose steep sides we dropp'd into the vale,
We heard the hymn they sang—a solemn sound
Heard anywhere, but in a place like this
'Tis more than human! Many precious rites
And customs of our rural ancestry,
Are gone, or stealing from us; this, I hope,
Will last for ever. Oft have I stopp'd
When on my way, I could not choose but stop,
So much I felt the awfulness of life,
In that one moment when the corse is lifted
In silence, with a hush of decency,
Then from the threshold moves with song of peace,
And confidential yearnings, to its home,
Its final home on earth. What traveller—who
(How far soe'er a stranger) does not own
The bond of brotherhood, when he sees them go,
A mute procession, on the houseless road,
Or passing by some single tenement
Or cluster'd dwellings, where again they raise
The monitory voice? But most of all
It touches, it confirms, and elevates,
Then, when the body, soon to be consign'd
Ashes to ashes, dust bequeath'd to dust,
Is raised from the church-aisle, and forward borne
Upon the shoulders of the next in love,
The nearest in affection or in blood;
Yea, by the very mourners who had knelt
Beside the coffin, resting on its lid

In silent grief their unuplifted heads,
And heard meanwhile the Psalmist's mournful plaint,
And that most awful scripture which declares
We shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed!
Have I not seen? — ye likewise may have seen
Son, husband, brothers — brothers side by side,
And son and father, also side by side,
Rise from that posture; and in concert move,
On the green turf following the vested priest,
Four dear supporters of one senseless weight,
From which they do not shrink, and under which
They faint not, but advance towards the grave
Step after step — together, with their firm
Unhidden faces; he that suffers most,
He outwardly, and inwardly perhaps,
The most serene, with most undaunted eye!
Oh! blest are they who live and die like these,
Loved with such love, and with such sorrow mourn'd!

'That poor man taken hence to-day,' replied
The Solitary, with a faint sarcastic smile,
Which did not please me, 'must be deem'd, I fear,
Of the unblest; for he will surely sink
Into his mother earth without such pomp
Of grief, depart without occasion given
By him for such array of fortitude.
Full seventy winters hath he lived — and mark!
This simple child will mourn his one short hour,
And I shall miss him; scanty tribute! yet,
This wanting, he would leave the sight of men,
If love were his sole claim upon their care,
Like a ripe date which in the desert falls
Without a hand to gather it.' At this
I interposed, though loth to speak, and said,
'Can it be thus, among so small a band
As ye must needs be here? In such a place
I would not willingly, methinks, lose sight
Of a departing cloud.' ''Twas not for love,'
Answer'd the sick man, with a careless voice,
'That I came hither; neither have I found

Among associates who have power of speech,
Nor in such other converse as is here,
Temptation so prevailing as to change
That mood, or undermine my first resolve.'
Then speaking in like careless sort, he said
To my benign companion. — 'Pity 'tis
That fortune did not guide you to this house
A few days earlier; then would you have seen
What stuff the dwellers in this solitude
(That seems by Nature framed to be the seat
And very bosom of pure innocence)
Are made of; an ungracious matter this!
Which, for truth's sake, yet in remembrance too
Of past discussions with this zealous friend
And advocate of humble life, I now
Will force upon his notice; undeterr'd
By the example of his own pure course,
And that respect and deference which a soul
May fairly claim, by niggard age enrich'd
In what it values most — the love of God
And his frail creature man; but ye shall hear.
I talk — and ye are standing in the sun
Without refreshment!'

Saying this he led
Towards the cottage: homely was the spot,
And to my feeling, ere we reach'd the door,
Had almost a forbidding nakedness;
Less fair, I grant, even painfully less fair,
Than it appear'd when from the valley's brink
We had look'd down upon it. All within,
As left by the departed company,
Was silent; and the solitary clock
Tick'd, as I thought, with melancholy sound.
Following our guide, we clomb the cottage stairs
And reach'd a small apartment dark and low,
Which was no sooner enter'd than our host
Said gaily, 'This is my domain, my cell,
My hermitage, my cabin — what you will:
I love it better than a snail his house.

But now ye shall be feasted with our best.'
So, with more ardour than an unripe girl
Left one day mistress of her mother's stores,
He went about his hospitable task.
My eyes were busy, and my thoughts no less;
And pleased I look'd upon my grey-hair'd friend,
As if to thank him; he return'd that look,
Cheer'd plainly, and yet serious. What a wreck
We had around us! scatter'd was the floor,
And, in like sort, chair, window-seat, and shelf,
With books, maps, fossils, wither'd plants and flowers,
And tufts of mountain moss; and here and there,
Lay, intermix'd with these, mechanic tools,
And scraps of paper,—some I could perceive
Scribbled with verse: a broken angling-rod
And shatter'd telescope, together link'd
By cobwebs, stood within a dusty nook;
And instruments of music some half-made,
Some in disgrace, hung dangling from the walls.
But speedily the promise was fulfill'd;
A feast before us, and a courteous host
Inviting us in glee to sit and eat.

. . . . . .

In genial mood,
While at our pastoral banquet thus we sate
Fronting the window of that little cell,
I could not ever and anon forbear
To glance an upward look on two huge peaks,
That from some other vale peer'd into this.
'Those lusty twins, on which your eyes are cast,'
Exclaim'd our host, 'if here you dwelt, would be
Your prized companions. Many are the notes
Which, in his tuneful course, the wind draws forth
From rocks, woods, caverns, heaths, and dashing shores;
And well those lofty brethren bear their part
In the wild concert—chiefly when the storm
Rides high; then all the upper air they fill

With roaring sound, that ceases not to flow
Like smoke along the level of the blast,
In mighty current; theirs, too, is the song
Of stream and headlong flood that seldom fails;
And, in the grim and breathless hour of noon,
Methinks that I have heard them echo back
The thunder's greeting: nor have Nature's laws
Left them ungifted with a power to yield
Music of finer tone; a harmony,
So do I call it, though it be the hand
Of silence,—though there be no voice; the clouds,
The mist, the shadows, light of golden suns,
Motions of moonlight, all come thither—touch,
And have an answer—thither come, and shape
A language not unwelcome to sick hearts
And idle spirits: there the sun himself,
At the calm close of summer's longest day,
Rests his substantial orb; between those heights,
And on the top of either pinnacle,
More keenly than elsewhere in night's blue vault,
Sparkle the stars, as of their station proud.
Thoughts are not busier in the mind of man
Than the mute agents stirring there:—alone
Here do I sit and watch.'

With bright'ning face
The Wanderer heard him speaking thus, and said,
'Now for the tale with which you threaten'd us!'
'In truth the threat escaped me unawares,
And was forgotten. Let this challenge stand
For my excuse, if what I shall relate
Tire your attention.'

Their host, 'The Solitary,' or 'Recluse,' as he is styled in the poem, proceeds to narrate the history of the man whose funeral rites had just been performed. He was a pauper, dependent on parish relief. The housewife, tempted by the receipt of this scanty pittance, and knowing also how to turn his services to account, gave him food and shelter. The old man endured the drud-

gery thus imposed upon him with 'the still contentedness of seventy years.' At length, towards the close of a stormy day, when since noon the rain had fallen in torrents, and the mountain tops were hidden, and black vapours coursed their sides, the dame rushed into the Solitary's presence, saying, with rueful voice, that the old man, who, at her bidding, had early climbed the moorland height to delve for turf, had not come down to his noontide meal, and, she feared, lay at the mercy of the raging storm!

'Inhuman!' said I, 'was an old man's life
Not worth the trouble of a thought? Alas!
This notice comes too late.'—

At this crisis, however, he observed with joy the return of her husband from a distant vale, and sallying forth together, they found the tools which the neglected veteran had dropped, but looked for him in vain: they shouted, but no answer: darkness fell, and fears for their own safety drove them home. On the following morning, collecting help from the neighbouring vale, the search was renewed, long and hopelessly, until chancing to pass the roofless and bare ruin of a chapel which stood upon a central ridge, they espied, among this wreck of stones, the object of their search, couching in a corner, half-covered with heather which he had gathered. Gently lifting the old man from the ground, the shepherds bore him slowly home. Seeing the sufferer had escaped with life, the wily housewife made great show of joy, no doubt glad to find her good name spared. He lingered, however, scarce a month after this exposure. Such is the story which we have briefly given without interruption, but the narrator pauses before its close to describe, with wealth of eloquent imagery, a wondrous vision which arrested him.

'The shepherds homeward moved
Through the dull mist, I following—when a step,
A single step, that freed me from the skirts
Of the blind vapour, open'd to my view
Glory beyond all glory ever seen
By waking sense or by the dreaming soul!

Though I am conscious that no power of words
Can body forth, no hues of speech can paint
That gorgeous spectacle — too bright and fair
Even for remembrance; yet the attempt may give
Collateral interest to this homely tale.
The appearance instantaneously disclosed,
Was of a mighty city — boldly say
A wilderness of building — sinking far
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth,
Far sinking into splendour — without end!
Fabric it seem'd of diamond and of gold,
With alabaster domes and silver spires;
And blazing terrace upon terrace, high
Uplifted; here, serene pavilions bright
In avenues disposed; there, towers begirt
With battlements, that on their restless fronts
Bore stars — illumination of all gems!
By earthly nature had the effect been wrought
Upon the dark materials of the storm
Now pacified; on them, and on the coves
And mountain-steeps and summits, whereunto
The vapours had receded, taking there
Their station under a cerulean sky.
O, 'twas an unimaginable sight!
Clouds, mists, streams, watery rocks, and emerald turf,
Clouds of all tincture, rocks and sapphire sky,
Confused, commingled, mutually inflamed,
Molten together, and composing thus,
Each lost in each, that marvellous array
Of temple, palace, citadel, and huge
Fantastic pomp of structure without name,
In fleecy folds voluminous enwrapp'd.
Right in the midst, where interspace appear'd
Of open court, an object like a throne
Under a shining canopy of state
Stood fix'd; and fix'd resemblances were seen
To implements of ordinary use,
But vast in size, in substance glorified;
Such as by Hebrew prophets were beheld
In vision — forms uncouth of mightiest power,

For admiration and mysterious awe.
Below me was the earth; this little vale,
Was low beneath my feet; 'twas visible—
I saw not, but I felt, that it was there.
That which I *saw* was the reveal'd abode
Of spirits in beatitude: my heart
Swell'd in my breast. "I have been dead," I cried,
"And now I live! Oh! wherefore do I live?"
And with that pang I pray'd to be no more!'

BOOK III.

The third book opens with some charming imaginative descriptions of natural objects in the valley, which give rise to pleasurable emotions in the minds of the two visitors, but excite despondency in that of the Solitary, who rather contemptuously describes the occupations of the Geologist and Botanist.

'This earnest pair may range from hill to hill,
And, if it please them, speed from clime to clime;
The mind is full—no pain is in their sport.'
'Then,' said I, interposing, 'one is near,
Who cannot but possess in your esteem
Place worthier still of envy. May I name,
Without offence, that fair-faced cottage-boy—
Dame Nature's pupil of the lowest form—
Youngest apprentice in the school of art?
Him, as we enter'd from the open glen,
You might have noticed, busily engaged,—
Heart, soul, and hands,—in mending the defects
Left in the fabric of a leaky dam,
Framed for enabling this penurious stream
To turn a slender mill (that new-made plaything)

For his delight — the happiest he of all!'

'Far happiest,' answer'd the desponding man,
'If, such as now he is, he might remain!
Ah! what avails imagination high
Or question deep? What profits all that earth,
Or heaven's blue vault, is suffer'd to put forth
Of impulse or allurement, for the soul
To quit the beaten track of life, and soar
Far as she finds a yielding element
In past or future; far as she can go
Through time or space — if neither in the one,
Nor in the other region, nor in aught
That fancy, dreaming o'er the map of things,
Hath placed beyond these penetrable bounds,
Words of assurance can be heard — if nowhere
A habitation, for consummate good,
Or for progressive virtue, by the search
Can be attain'd, a better sanctuary
From doubt and sorrow, than the senseless grave?'

'Is this,' the grey-hair'd wanderer mildly said,
'The voice, which we so lately overheard,
To that same child, addressing tenderly
The consolations of a hopeful mind?
"*His body is at rest, his soul in heaven.*"
These were your words; and, verily, methinks
Wisdom is oft-times nearer when we stoop
Than when we soar.'

The Solitary eloquently replies, but still in a sceptical and desponding tone: the poem continues —

This was the bitter language of the heart;
But, while he spake, look, gesture, tone of voice,
Though discomposed and vehement, were such
As skill and graceful Nature might suggest
To a proficient of the tragic scene,
Standing before the multitude, beset
With sorrowful events; and we, who heard

And saw, were moved. Desirous to divert,
Or stem, the current of the speaker's thoughts,
We signified a wish to leave that place
Of stillness and close privacy, which seem'd
A nook for self-examination framed
Or for confession, in the sinner's need,
Hidden from all men's view. To our attempt
He yielded not; but, pointing to a slope
Of mossy turf, defended from the sun;
And, on that couch inviting us to rest,
Towards that tender-hearted man he turn'd
A serious eye, and thus his speech renew'd: —

'You never saw, your eyes did never look
On the bright form of her whom once I loved:
Her silver voice was heard upon the earth,
A sound unknown to you; else, honour'd friend!
Your heart had borne a pitiable share
Of what I suffer'd when I wept that loss,
And suffer now, not seldom, from the thought
That I remember and can weep no more. —
Stripp'd as I am of all the golden fruit
Of self-esteem; and by the cutting blasts
Of self-reproach, familiarly assail'd;
I would not yet be of such wintry bareness,
But that some leaf of your regard should hang
Upon my naked branches: lively thoughts
Give birth, full often, to unguarded words;
I grieve that, in your presence, from my tongue
Too much of frailty hath already dropp'd:
But that too much demands still more.

'You know,
Reverend compatriot; and to you, kind sir
(Not to be deem'd a stranger, as you come
Following the guidance of these welcome feet
To our secluded vale), it may be told,
That my demerits did not sue in vain
To one, on whose mild radiance many gazed
With hope, and all with pleasure. This fair bride—

In the devotedness of youthful love,
Preferring me to parents, and the choir
Of gay companions, to the natal roof,
And all known places and familiar sights
(Resign'd with sadness gently weighing down
Her trembling expectations, but no more
Than did to her due honour, and to me
Yielded, that day, a confidence sublime
In what I had to build upon) — this bride,
Young, modest, meek, and beautiful, I led
To a low cottage in a sunny bay,
Where the salt sea innocuously breaks,
And the sea-breeze as innocently breathes,
On Devon's leafy shores; a shelter'd hold,
In a soft clime encouraging the soil
To a luxuriant bounty! As our steps
Approach th' embower d abode — our chosen seat
See, rooted in the earth, its kindly bed,
Th' unendanger'd myrtle, deck'd with flowers,
Before the threshold stands to welcome us!
While, in the flowering myrtle's neighbourhood,
Not overlook'd, but courting no regard,
Those native plants, the holly and the yew,
Gave modest intimation to the mind
Of willingness with which they would unite
With the green myrtle, t' endear the hours
Of winter, and protect that pleasant place.
Wild were the walks upon those lonely downs,
Track leading into track, how mark'd, how worn
Into bright verdure, among fern and gorse,
Winding away its never-ending line
On their smooth surface, evidence was none:
But there lay open to our daily haunt,
A range of unappropriated earth,
Where youth's ambitious feet might move at large;
Whence, unmolested wanderers, we beheld
The shining giver of the day diffuse
His brightness o'er a tract of sea and land
Gay as our spirits, free as our desires,
As our enjoyments boundless. From these heights

We dropp'd, at pleasure, into sylvan combs;
Where arbours of impenetrable shade,
And mossy seats, detain'd us side by side,
With hearts at ease, and knowledge in our hearts,
"That all the grove and all the day was ours."

'But in due season Nature interfered,
And call'd my partner to resign her share
In the pure freedom of that wedded life,
Enjoy'd by us in common. To my hope,
To my heart's wish, my tender mate became
The thankful captive of maternal bonds,
And those wild paths were left to me alone;
There could I meditate on follies past,
And, like a weary voyager escaped
From risk and hardship, inwardly retrace
A course of vain delights and thoughtless guilt,
And self-indulgence — without shame pursued;
There, undisturb'd, could think of, and could thank
Her — whose submissive spirit was to me
Rule and restraint — my guardian; shall I say
That earthly Providence whose guiding love
Within a port of rest had lodged me safe;
Safe from temptation, and from danger far?
Strains follow'd of acknowledgment address'd
To an Authority enthron'd above
The reach of sight; from whom, as from their source,
Proceed all visible ministers of good
That walk the earth — Father of heaven and earth,
Father, and King, and Judge, adored and fear'd!
These acts of mind, and memory, and heart,
And spirit — interrupted and relieved
By observations, transient as the glance
Of flying sunbeams, or to th' outward form
Cleaving, with power inherent and intense
As the mute insect fix'd upon the plant
On whose soft leaves it hangs, and from whose cup
Draws imperceptibly its nourishment,
Endear'd my wanderings; and the mother's kiss,
And infant's smile, awaited my return.

'In privacy we dwelt — a wedded pair,
Companions daily, often all day long;
Not placed by fortune within easy reach
Of various intercourse, nor wishing aught
Beyond the allowance of our own fireside,
The twain within our happy cottage born
Inmates, and heirs of our united love;
Graced mutually by difference of sex,
By the endearing name of nature bound.
And with no wider interval of time
Between their several births than served for one
To establish something of a leader's sway.

. . . . . .

'Seven years of occupation undisturb'd
Establish'd seemingly a right to hold
That happiness: and use and habit gave
To what an alien spirit had acquired
A patrimonial sanctity. And thus,
With thoughts and wishes bounded to this world,
I lived and breathed; most grateful,— if t' enjoy
Without repining or desire for more,
For different lot, or change to higher sphere
(Only except some impulses of pride
With no determined object, though upheld
By theories with suitable support) —
Most grateful, if in such wise to enjoy
Be proof of gratitude for what we have:
Else, I allow, most thankless. But at once
From some dark seat of fatal power was urged
A claim that shatter'd all. Our blooming girl,
Caught in the gripe of death, with such brief time
To struggle in as scarcely would allow
Her cheek to change its colour, was convey'd
From us to regions inaccessible,
Where height, or depth, admits not the approach
Of living man, though longing to pursue.
With even as brief a warning — and how soon
With what short interval of time between

I tremble yet to think of — our last prop,
Our happy life's only remaining stay —
The brother, follow'd — and was seen no more!

'Calm as a frozen lake when ruthless winds
Blow fiercely, agitating earth and sky,
The mother now remain'd; as if in her,
Who, to the lowest region of the soul,
Had been erewhile unsettled and disturb'd,
This second visitation had no power
To shake — but only to bind up and seal;
And to establish thankfulness of heart
In Heaven's determinations, ever just.
The eminence on which her spirit stood,
Mine was unable to attain. Immense
The space that sever'd us! But, as the sight
Communicates with heaven's ethereal orbs
Incalculably distant; so, I felt
That consolation may descend from far
(And that is intercourse and union too),
While, overcome with speechless gratitude,
And, with a holier love inspired, I look'd
On her — at once superior to my woes
And partner of my loss. O heavy change!
Dimness o'er this clear luminary crept
Insensibly; th' immortal and divine
Yielded to mortal reflux; her pure glory,
As from the pinnacle of worldly state
Wretched ambition drops astounded, fell
Into a gulf obscure of silent grief,
And keen-heart anguish, — of itself ashamed,
Yet obstinately cherishing itself:
And left me, on this earth, disconsolate!

'What follow'd cannot be review'd in thought,
Much less retraced in words. If she, of life
Blameless, so intimate with love and joy
And all the tender motions of the soul,
Had been supplanted, could I hope to stand,
Infirm, dependent, and now destitute?

I call'd on dreams and visions to disclose
That which is veil'd from waking thought; conjured
Eternity, as men constrain a ghost
To appear and answer; to the grave I spake
Imploringly; look'd up, and ask'd the heavens
If angels traversed their cerulean floors,
If fix'd or wandering star could tidings yield
Of the departed spirit — what abode
It occupies — what consciousness retains
Of former loves and interests. Then my soul
Turn'd inward, to examine of what stuff
Time's fetters are composed; and life was put
To inquisition long and profitless!
By pain of heart now check'd — and now impell'd —
The intellectual power, through words and things,
Went sounding on, a dim and perilous way!
And from those transports and these toils abstruse,
Some trace am I enabled to retain
Of time, else lost; existing unto me
Only by records in myself not found.

From the prostration which ensued upon the blight thus cast over his happiness, the Recluse is roused by the announcement of the destruction of the Bastille, and by all the brilliant hopes which were then indulged in for the spread of freedom over the globe. He repairs to France; is reconverted to the world; 'Society became his glittering bride, and airy hopes his children,' — he enters into the dissipation of the times. His enthusiastic dreams are dissolved by the course of events, liberty becoming licence, and all the horrors of the French Revolution following. Seeing also that in Britain there ruled a panic dread of change, and that weak men were advanced to posts of honour, he resolves

'To fly, for safeguard, to some foreign shore,
Remote from Europe, from her blasted hopes,
Her fields of carnage, and polluted air.'

He therefore sails to America, but even there, he finds

only matter for scorn, in the contentions of the various parties in the Republic, and he flies to the far West, in search of man — 'Primeval Nature's child.' — simple in his dignity and strength; but, instead of that bright creation of his fancy, there appeared

'A creature, squalid, vengeful, and impure;
Remorseless, and submissive to no law
But superstitious fear, and abject sloth.
Enough is told! Here am I — ye have heard
What evidence I seek, and vainly seek;
What from my fellow-beings I require,
And cannot find; what I myself have lost,
Nor can regain: how languidly I look
Upon this visible fabric of the world,
May be divined — perhaps it hath been said,
But spare your pity, if there be in me
Aught that deserves respect: for I exist —
Within myself — not comfortless. The tenor
Which my life holds, he readily may conceive
Whoe'er hath stood to watch a mountain brook
In some still passage of its course, and seen
Within the depths of its capacious breast
Inverted trees, and rocks, and azure sky;
And, on its glassy surface, specks of foam
And conglobated bubbles undissolved,
Numerous as stars; that by their onward lapse
Betray to sight the motion of the stream,
Else imperceptible; meanwhile, is heard
Perchance a roar or murmur; and the sound
Though soothing, and the little floating isles
Though beautiful, are both by Nature charged
With the same pensive office; and make known
Through what perplexing labyrinths, abrupt
Precipitations, and untoward straits,
The earth-born wanderer hath pass'd; and quickly,
That respite o'er, like traverses and toils
Must be again encounter'd. Such a stream
Is human life; and so the spirit fares
In the best quiet to its course allow'd:

And such is mine — save only for a hope
That my particular current soon will reach
Th' unfathomable gulf where all is still!'

BOOK IV.

HERE closed the tenant of that lonely vale
His mournful narrative, commenced in pain,
In pain commenced, and ended without peace;
Yet temper'd, not unfrequently, with strains
Of native feeling grateful to our minds,
And doubtless yielding some relief to his,
While we sate listening with compassion due.

The Wanderer endeavours to convince his friend that a belief in a superintending Providence is the only adequate support under affliction. He acknowledges, however, the difficulty of attaining a lively faith, and the grief which attends failure in the attempt.

Then, as we issued from that covert nook,
He thus continued, lifting up his eyes
To heaven: — 'How beautiful this dome of sky,
And the vast hills, in fluctuation fix'd
At Thy command, how awful! Shall the soul,
Human and rational, report of Thee,
Even less than these? Be mute who will, who can,
Yet I will praise Thee with impassion'd voice:
My lips, that may forget Thee in the crowd,
Cannot forget Thee here, where Thou hast built
For thy own glory in the wilderness!
[illegible] didst Thou constitute a priest of thine,

In such a temple as we now behold
Rear'd for Thy presence: therefore am I bound
To worship, here and everywhere, as one
Not doom'd to ignorance, though forced to tread,
From childhood up, the ways of poverty;
From unreflecting ignorance preserved,
And from debasement rescued. By thy grace
The particle divine remain'd unquench'd:
And, 'mid the wild weeds of a rugged soil,
Thy bounty caused to flourish deathless flowers,
From Paradise transplanted. Wintry age
Impends: the frost will gather round my heart,
And if they wither, I am worse than dead!
Come labour, when the worn-out frame requires
Perpetual sabbath — come, disease and want,
And sad exclusion through decay of sense —
But leave me unabated trust in Thee —
And let Thy favour, to the end of life,
Inspire me with ability to seek
Repose and hope among eternal things —
Father of heaven and earth! — and I am rich,
And will possess my portion in content!

. . . . . .

'What then remains? To seek
Those helps, for his occasion ever near,
Who lacks not will to use them; vows, renew'd
On the first motion of a holy thought;
Vigils of contemplation; praise, and prayer, —
A stream which, from the fountain of the heart
Issuing, however feebly, nowhere flows
Without access of unexpected strength.
But, above all, the victory is most sure
For him who, seeking faith by virtue, strives
To yield entire submission to the law
Of conscience, — conscience reverenced and obey'd,
As God's most intimate presence in the soul,
And his most perfect image in the world.
Endeavour thus to live; these rules regard;

These helps solicit; and a steadfast seat
Shall then be yours among the happy few
Who dwell on earth, yet breathe empyreal air,
Sons of the morning.

The Wanderer next applies his discourse to that other cause of his friend's dejection, and shews the unreasonableness of expecting sudden changes for the better in the mind of a whole nation, — reminds him how slowly great results are brought about in the natural world, and insists on the necessity of patience and fortitude when contemplating the course of great moral and political revolutions. Further, as curatives of dejection, he recommeuds a close study of Nature, and of the habits of the inferior creatures, and enjoins active bodily exercise.

Rise with the lark! your matins shall obtain
Grace, be their composition what it may,
If but with hers perform'd; climb once again,
Climb every day those ramparts; meet the breeze
Upon their tops, — adventurous as a bee
That from your garden thither soars, to feed
On new-blown heath; let yon commanding rock
Be your frequented watch-tower; roll the stone
In thunder down the mountains: with all your might
Chase the wild goat; and, if the bold red deer
Fly to these harbours, driven by hound and horn
Loud echoing, add your speed to the pursuit;
So, wearied to your hut shall you return,
And sink at evening into sound repose.'

The Solitary lifted towards the hills
An animated eye; and thoughts were mine
Which this ejaculation clothed in words: —
'Oh! what a joy it were, in vigorous health,
To have a body (this our vital frame
With shrinking sensibility endued,
And all the nice regards of flesh and blood),
And to the elements surrender it
As if it were a spirit! — How divine,

The liberty, for frail, for mortal man,
To roam at large among unpeopled glens
And mountainous retirements, only trod
By devious footsteps ; regions consecrate
To oldest time ! and reckless of the storm
That keeps the raven quiet in her nest,
Be as a presence or a motion — one
Among the many there ; and, while the mists
Flying, and rainy vapours, call out shapes
And phantoms from the crags and solid earth
As fast as a musician scatters sounds
Out of an instrument ; and, while the streams
(As at a first creation and in haste
To exercise their untried faculties),
Descending from the region of the clouds
And starting from the hollows of the earth
More multitudinous every moment, rend
Their way before them, what a joy to roam
An equal among mightiest energies ;
And haply sometimes with articulate voice,
Amid the deafening tumult, scarcely heard
By him that utters it, exclaim aloud,
" Rage on ye elements ! let moon and stars
Their aspects lend, and mingle in their turn
With this commotion (ruinous though it be)
From day to night, from night to day, prolonged ! "'

The Wanderer then addresses the Recluse.

'Compatriot — friend ! remote are Garry's hills,
The streams far distant of your native glen ;
Yet is their form and image here express'd
As by a duplicate — at least set forth
With brotherly resemblance. Turn your steps
Wherever fancy leads ; by day, by night,
Are various engines working, not the same
As those by which your soul in youth was moved,
But by the great Artificer endued
With no inferior pow'r. You dwell alone ;
You walk, you live, you speculate alone ;

Yet doth remembrance, like a sovereign prince,
For you a stately gallery maintain
Of gay or tragic pictures. You have seen,
Have acted, suffered, travell'd far, observed
With no incurious eye; and books are yours,
Within whose silent chambers treasure lies
Preserved from age to age; more precious far
Than that accumulated store of gold
And orient gems, which, for a day of need,
The sultan hides within ancestral tombs;
These hoards of truth you can unlock at will:
And music waits upon your skilful touch, —
Sounds which the wandering shepherd from these heights
Hears, and forgets his purpose. Furnish'd thus,
How can you droop, if willing to be raised?

He next argues that superstition is better than apathy, which was unknown in the infancy of society, — the various modes of Religion preventing it. He cites in proof the beliefs of the Jews, Persians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, and Greeks. The origin of many of the classic deities is described with a lively and imaginative force which interests the Recluse as a scholar.

'Once more to distant ages of the world
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts
The face which rural solitude might wear
To the unenlighten'd swains of pagan Greece.
In that fair clime the lonely herdsman, stretch'd
On the soft grass through half a summer's day,
With music lull'd his indolent repose:
And, in some fit of weariness, if he,
When his own breath was silent, chanced to hear
A distant strain, far sweeter than the sounds
Which his poor skill could make, his fancy fetch'd
Even from the blazing chariot of the sun,
A beardless youth, who touch'd a golden lute,
And fill'd the illumined groves with ravishment.
The nightly hunter, lifting up his eyes

Towards the crescent moon, with grateful heart
Call'd on the lovely wanderer who bestow'd
That timely light, to share his joyous sport;
And hence, a beaming goddess, with her nymphs,
Across the lawn and through the darksome grove
(Not unaccompanied with tuneful notes
By echo multiplied from rock or cave)
Swept in the storm of chase, as moon and stars
Glance rapidly along the clouded heavens,
When winds are blowing strong. The traveller slaked
His thirst from rill or gushing fount, and thank'd
The Naiad. Sunbeams upon distant hills
Gliding apace, with shadows in their train,
Might, with small help from fancy, be transform'd
Into fleet Oreads, sporting visibly.
The zephyrs fanning as they pass'd, their wings,
Lack'd not, for love, fair objects, whom they woo'd
With gentle whisper. Wither'd boughs grotesque,
Stripp'd of their leaves and twigs by hoary age,
From depth of shaggy covert peeping forth
In the low vale, or on steep mountain-side —
And sometimes, intermix'd with stirring horns
Of the live deer, or goats' depending beard —
These were the lurking satyrs, a wild brood
Of gamesome deities — or Pan himself,
The simple shepherd's awe-inspiring god!'

No apter strain could have been chosen: I mark'd
Its kindly influence on the yielding brow
Of our companion gradually diffused,
While, listening, he had paced the noiseless turf,
Like one whose untired ear a murmuring stream
Detains.

The length to which the dialogue between the three friends is drawn out in this portion of the Excursion, precludes the giving, within due limits, more than one or two detached quotations.

O blest seclusion! when the mind admits

The law of duty; and thereby can live
Through each vicissitude of loss and gain,
Link'd in entire complacence with her choice;
When youth's presumptuousness is mellow'd down,
And manhood's vain anxiety dismiss'd;
When wisdom shows her seasonable fruit,
Upon the boughs of sheltering leisure hung
In sober plenty; when the spirit stoops
To drink with gratitude the crystal stream
Of unreproved enjoyment; and is pleased
To muse, and be saluted by the air
Of meek repentance, wafting wall-flower scents
From out the crumbling ruins of fallen pride
And chambers of transgression, now forlorn.
O calm, contented days, and peaceful nights!
Who, when such good can be obtain'd, would strive
To reconcile his manhood to a couch
Soft, as may seem, but, under that disguise,
Stuff'd with the thorny substance of the past,
For fix'd annoyance; and full oft beset
With floating dreams, disconsolate and black,
The vapoury phantoms of futurity?

. . . . . .

'I have seen
A curious child who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipp'd shell;
To which, in silence hush'd, his very soul
Listen'd intensely; and his countenance soon
Brighten'd with joy; for murmurings from within
Were heard, — sonorous cadences! whereby,
To his belief, the monitor express'd
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the universe itself
Is to the ear of faith; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things;
Of ebb and flow, and ever-during power;

And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought,
Devout above the meaning of your will.
Yes, you have felt, and may not cease to feel.
The estate of man would be indeed forlorn,
If false conclusions of the reasoning power
Made the eye blind, and closed the passages
Through which the ear converses with the heart.
Has not the soul, the being of your life,
Received a shock of awful consciousness,
In some calm season, when these lofty rocks
At night's approach bring down the unclouded sky
To rest upon their circumambient walls;
A temple framing of dimensions vast,
And yet not too enormous for the sound
Of human anthems,— choral song, or burst
Sublime of instrumental harmony,
To glorify the Eternal! What if these
Did never break the stillness that prevails
Here — if the solemn nightingale be mute,
And the soft woodlark here did never chant
Her vespers, — Nature fails not to provide
Impulse and utterance. The whispering air
Sends inspiration from the shadowy heights,
And blind recesses of the caverned rocks;
The little rills, and waters numberless,
Inaudible by daylight, blend their notes
With the loud streams: and often, at the hour
When issue forth the first pale stars, is heard,
Within the circuit of this fabric huge,
One voice — the solitary raven, flying
Athwart the concave of the dark blue dome,
Unseen, perchance above the power of sight —
An iron knell! with echoes from afar,
Faint — and still fainter — as the cry, with which
The wanderer accompanies her flight
Through the calm region, fades upon the ear,
Diminishing by distance till it seem'd

To expire, yet from the abyss is caught again,
And yet again recover'd!

'But descending
From these imaginative heights, that yield
Far-stretching views into eternity,
Acknowledge that to Nature's humbler power
Your cherished sullenness is forced to bend
Even here, where her amenities are sown
With sparing hand. Then trust yourself abroad
To range her blooming bowers and spacious fields,
Where on the labours of the happy throng
She smiles, including in her wide embrace
City, and town, and tower, and sea with ships
Sprinkled; be our companion while we track
Her rivers populous with gliding life;
While, free as air, o'er printless sands we march,
And pierce the gloom of her majestic woods,
Roaming, or resting under grateful shade,
In peace and meditative cheerfulness;
Where living things, and things inanimate,
Do speak, at Heaven's command, to eye and ear,
And speak to social reason's inner sense,
With inarticulate language.

'For the man,
Who, in this spirit, communes with the forms
Of Nature; who, with understanding heart,
Doth know and love such objects as excite
No morbid passions, no disquietude,
No vengeance, and no hatred, needs must feel
So deeply, that, unsatisfied with aught
Less pure and exquisite, he cannot choose
But seek for objects of a kindred love
In fellow-natures and a kindred joy.
Accordingly, he by degrees perceives
His feelings of aversion soften'd down;
A holy tenderness pervade his frame.
His sanity of reason not impair'd,
Nay rather, all his thoughts now flowing clear,

From a clear fountain flowing, he looks round
And seeks for good; and finds the good he seeks;
Until abhorence and contempt are things
He only knows by name; and if he hear
From other mouths, the language which they speak,
He is compassionate: and has no thought,
No feeling, which can overcome his love.

Some stanzas in the same lofty strain succeed, and the narrative then continues.

The sun, before his place of rest were reach'd,
Had yet to travel far, but unto us,
To us who stood low in that hollow dell,
He had become invisible,—a pomp
Leaving behind of yellow radiance spread
Upon the mountain-sides, in contrast bold
With ample shadows, seemingly no less
Than those resplendent lights, his rich bequest,
A dispensation of his evening power.
Adown the path which from the glen had led
The funeral train, the shepherd and his mate
Were seen descending; forth in transport ran
Our little page; the rustic pair approach;
And in the matron's aspect may be read
A plain assurance that the words which told
How that neglected pensioner was sent,
Before his time into a quiet grave,
Had done to her humanity no wrong.
But we are kindly welcomed; promptly served
With ostentatious zeal. Along the floor
Of the small cottage in the lonely dell
A grateful couch was spread for our repose;
Where, in the guise of mountaineers, we slept,
Stretch'd upon fragrant heath, and lull'd by sound
Of far-off torrents charming the still night,
And to tired limbs and over-busy thoughts,
Inviting sleep and soft forgetfulness.

BOOK V.

'FAREWELL, deep valley, with thy one rude house,
And its small lot of life-supporting fields,
And guardian rocks! With unreverted eyes
I cannot pass thy bounds, attractive seat!
To the still influx of the morning light
Open, and day's pure cheerfulness, but veil'd
From human observation, as if yet
Primeval forests wrapp'd thee round with dark
Impenetrable shade; once more farewell,
Majestic circuit, beautiful abyss,
By Nature destined from the birth of things
For quietness profound!'

Upon the side
Of that green slope, the outlet of the vale,
Lingering behind my comrades, thus I breathed
A parting tribute to a spot that seem'd
Like the fix'd centre of a troubled world.
And now, pursuing leisurely my way,
'How vain,' thought I, 'it is, by change of place
To seek that comfort which the mind denies;
Yet trial and temptation oft are shunn'd
Wisely; and by such tenure do we hold
Frail life's possessions, that even they whose fate
Yields no peculiar reason of complaint
Might, by the promise that is here, be won
To steal from active duties, and embrace
Obscurity, and calm forgetfulness.
Knowledge, methinks, in these disorder'd times,
Should be allow'd a privilege to have
Her anchorites, like piety of old;
Men, who, from faction sacred, and unstain'd
By war, might, if so minded, turn aside
Uncensured, and subsist, a scatter'd few,
Living to God and nature, and content
With that communion. Consecrated be

The spots where such abide! But happier still
The man, whom, furthermore, a hope attends
That meditation and research may guide
His privacy to principles and powers
Discover'd, or invented, or set forth,
Through his acquaintance with the ways of truth,
In lucid order; so that, when his course
Is run, some faithful eulogist may say,
He sought no praise — and praise did overlook
His unobtrusive merit; but his life
Sweet to himself, was exercised in good
That shall survive his name and memory.'

Acknowledgments of gratitude sincere
Accompanied these musings; fervent thanks
For my own peaceful lot and happy choice;
A choice that from the passions of the world
Withdrew, and fix'd me in a still retreat,
Shelter'd but not to social duties lost,
Secluded but not buried; and with song
Cheering my days, and with industrious thought,
With the ever-welcome company of books,
By virtuous friendship's soul-sustaining aid,
And with the blessings of domestic love.

Thus occupied in mind I paced along,
Following the rugged road by sledge or wheel
Worn in the moorland till I overtook
My two associates in the morning sun
Halting together on a rocky knoll,
From which the road descended rapidly
To the green meadows of another vale.

Here did our pensive host put forth his hand
In sign of farewell. 'Nay,' the old man said,
'The fragrant air its coolness still retains;
The herds and flocks are yet abroad to crop
The dewy grass; you cannot leave us now,
We must not part at this inviting hour.'
To that injunction, earnestly express'd,

He yielded, though reluctant; for his mind
Instinctively disposed him to retire
To his own covert; as a billow, heaved
Upon the beach, rolls back into the sea.
So we descend; and winding round a rock
Attain a point that show'd the valley, stretch'd
In length before us; and, not distant far,
Upon a rising ground, a grey church-tower,
Whose battlements were screen'd by tufted trees.
And towards a crystal mere, that lay beyond,
Among steep hills and woods embosom'd, flow'd
A copious stream with boldly-winding course;
Here traceable, there hidden, there again
To sight restored, and glittering in the sun.
On the stream's bank, and everywhere, appear'd
Fair dwellings, single, or in social knots,
Some scatter'd o'er the level, others perch'd
On the hill-sides, a cheerful quiet scene,
Now in its morning purity array'd.

'As 'mid some happy valley of the Alps,'
Said I, 'once happy, ere tyrannic power,
Wantonly breaking in upon the Swiss,
Destroy'd their unoffending commonwealth,
A popular equality doth seem
Here to prevail; and yet a house of state
Stands yonder, one beneath whose roof, methinks,
A rural lord might dwell.' 'No feudal pomp,'
Replied our friend, a chronicler who stood
Where'er he moved upon familiar ground —
'Nor feudal power is there; but there abides,
In his allotted home, a genuine Priest,
The shepherd of his flock; or, as a king
Is styled, when most affectionately praised,
The father of his people — such is he;
And rich and poor, and young and old, rejoice
Under his spiritual sway, collected round him
In this sequester'd realm. He hath vouchsafed
To me some portion of his kind regard;
And something also of his inner mind

Hath he imparted — but I speak of him
As he is known to all.

'The calm delights
Of unambitious piety he chose,
And learning's solid dignity; though born
Of knightly race, not wanting powerful friends.
This good to reap, these pleasures to secure,
Hither in prime of manhood, he withdrew
From academic bowers. He loved the spot —
Who does not love his native soil? — he prized
The ancient rural character, composed
Of simple manners, feelings unsuppress'd
And undisguised, and strong and serious thought:
A character reflected in himself,
With such embellishments as well beseems
His rank and sacred function. This deep vale
Is lengthen'd out by many a winding reach,
Not visible to us; and one of these
A turreted manorial hall adorns,
In which the good man's ancestors have dwelt
From age to age, the patrons of this cure.
To them, and to his decorating hand,
The vicar's dwelling, and the whole domain,
Owes that presiding aspect which might well
Attract your notice; statelier than could else
Have been bestow'd, in course of common chance,
On an unwealthy mountain benefice.'

This said, oft halting, we pursued our way;
Nor reach'd the village churchyard till the sun,
Travelling at steadier pace than ours, had risen
Above the summit of the highest hills,
And round our path darted oppressive beams.

As chanced, the portals of the sacred pile
Stood open; and we enter'd. On my frame,
At such transition from the fervid air,
A grateful coolness fell, that seem'd to strike
The heart, in concert with that temperate awe

And natural reverence which the place inspired.
Not framed to nice proportions was the pile,
But large and massy, for duration built;
With pillars crowded, and the roof upheld
By naked rafters intricately cross'd,
Like leafless underboughs in some thick grove,
All wither'd by the depth of shade above.
Admonitory texts inscribed the walls,
Each in its ornamental scroll inclosed;
Each also crown'd with wingèd heads — a pair
Of rudely-painted cherubim. The floor
Of nave and aisle, in unpretending guise,
Was occupied by oaken benches ranged
In seemly rows; the chancel only show'd
Some inoffensive marks of earthly state
And vain distinction.

A description follows of the usual characteristics of the interior of a country church. The sexton enters, in sexton fashion, humming a tune, which rouses the Solitary from a reverie. The three companions then repair to the churchyard —

To a spot
Where sun and shade were intermix'd; for there
A broad oak, stretching forth its leafy arms
From an adjoining pasture, overhung
Small space of that green churchyard with a light
And pleasant awning. On the moss-grown wall
My ancient friend and I together took
Our seats; and thus the Solitary spake,
Standing before us: — 'Did you note the mien
Of that self-solaced, easy-hearted churl,
Death's hireling, who scoops out his neighbour's grave,
Or wraps an old acquaintance up in clay,
As unconcern'd as when he plants a tree?
I was abruptly summon'd by his voice
From some affecting images and thoughts.
And from the company of serious words.
Much, yesterday, was said in glowing phrase

Of our sublime dependencies, and hopes
For future states of being; and the wings
Of speculation, joyfully outspread,
Hover'd above our destiny on earth;
But stoop, and place the prospect of the soul
In sober contrast with reality,
And man's substantial life. If this mute earth
Of what it holds could speak, and every grave
Were as a volume, shut, yet capable
Of yielding its contents to eye and ear,
We should recoil, stricken with sorrow and shame,
To see disclosed, by such dread proof, how ill
That which is done accords with what is known
To reason, and by conscience is enjoin'd;
How idly, how perversely, life's whole course,
To this conclusion deviates from the line,
Or of the end stops short, proposed to all
At its aspiring outset. Mark the babe
Not long accustom'd to this breathing world;
One that hath barely learn'd to shape a smile,
Though yet irrational of soul, to grasp
With tiny fingers — to let fall a tear;
And as the heavy cloud of sleep dissolves,
To stretch his limbs, bemocking as might seem,
The outward functions of intelligent man,
A grave proficient in amusive feats
Of puppetry, that from the lap declare
His expectations, and announce his claims
To that inheritance which millions rue
That they were ever born to! In due time
A day of solemn ceremonial comes;
When they, who for this minor hold in trust
Rights that transcend the humblest heritage
Of mere humanity, present their charge,
For this occasion daintily adorn'd
At the baptismal font. And when the pure
And consecrating element hath cleansed
The original stain, the child is there received
Into the second ark, Christ's Church, with trust
That he, from wrath redeem'd, therein shall float

Over the billows of this troublesome world,
To the fair land of everlasting life.
Corrupt affections, covetous desires,
Are all renounced; high as the thought of man
Can carry virtue, virtue is profess'd;
A dedication made, a promise given
For due provision to control and guide,
And unremitting progress to insure
In holiness and truth.'

In reply to these remarks by the Solitary, the Author enters into a defence of the ritual, and established forms of the church. Further conversation ensues: the Solitary pointing towards the smiling valley asserts that outward appearances of content and happiness are in some degree illusive. While they thus hold serious discourse, the Pastor approaches, and, after mutual greetings, they inform him of the various topics under discussion, and request him to state his opinions. He complies, and in the course of his address introduces the following apt illustration.

'Yet for the general purposes of faith
In Providence, for solace and support,
We may not doubt that who can best subject
The will to reason's law, can strictliest live
And act in that obedience, he shall gain
The clearest apprehension of those truths,
Which unassisted reason's utmost power
Is too infirm to reach. But, waiving this,
And our regards confining within bounds
Of less exalted consciousness, through which
The very multitude are free to range,
We safely may affirm that human life
Is either fair or tempting, a soft scene
Grateful to sight, refreshing to the soul,
Or a forbidden tract of cheerless view;
Even as the same is look'd at or approach'd.
Permit me,' said the Priest, continuing, 'here
To use an illustration of my thought,
Drawn from the very spot on which we stand.

— In changeful April, when, as he is wont,
Winter has reassumed a short-lived sway
And whiten'd all the surface of the fields,
If, from the sullen region of the north,
Towards the circuit of this holy ground,
Your walk conducts you, ere the vigorous sun,
High climbing, hath attain'd his noon-tide height,
These mounds, transversely lying side by side
From east to west, before you will appear
A dreary plain of unillumined snow,
With more than wintry cheerlessness and gloom
Saddening the heart. Go forward, and look back;
On the same circuit of this churchyard ground
Look, from the quarter whence the lord of light,
Of life, of love, and gladness, doth dispense
His beams, which unexcluded in their fall,
Upon the southern side of every grave
Have gently exercised a melting power,
Then will a vernal prospect greet your eye,
All fresh and beautiful, and green and bright,
Hopeful and cheerful — vanish'd is the snow,
Vanish'd or hidden; and the whole domain,
To some, too highly minded, might appear
A meadow carpet for the dancing hours.
This contrast, not unsuitable to life,
Is to that other state more apposite,
Death, and its twofold aspect; wintry one,
Cold, sullen, blank, from hope and joy shut out —
The other, which the ray divine hath touch'd,
Replete with vivid promise, bright as spring.'

The Recluse chimes in with some remarks with which the Wanderer, as usual, does not accord, and he therefore makes reply.

'That which we feel we utter: as we think
So have we argued: reaping for our pains
No visible recompense. For our relief,
You,' to the Pastor turning thus he spake,
'Have kindly interposed. May I entreat

Your further help? The mine of real life
Dig for us; and present us, in the shape
Of virgin ore, that gold which we by pains
Fruitless as those of aëry alchemists,
Seek from the torturing crucible. Their lies
Around us a domain where you have long
Held spiritual sway, have guided and consoled,
And watch'd the outward course and inner heart.
Give us, for our abstraction solid facts;
For our disputes, plain pictures. Say what man
He is who cultivates yon hanging field;
What qualities of mind she bears, who comes,
For morn and evening service, with her pail,
To that green pasture; place before our sight
The family who dwell within yon house
Fenced round with glittering laurel; or in that
Below, from which the curling smoke ascends.
Or rather, as we stand on holy earth,
And have the dead around us, take from them
Your instances; for they are both best known,
And by frail man most equitably judged.
Epitomize the life; pronounce, you can,
Authentic epitaphs on some of these
Who, from their lowly mansions hither brought,
Beneath this turf lie mouldering at our feet.
So, by your record, may our doubts be solved;
And so, not searching higher, we may learn
To prize the breath we share with human kind,
And look upon the dust of man with awe.'

The Pastor acknowledges his fitness for the task, but before speaking of those laid at rest in the churchyard, gives one picture of the living, and points out a small spot of cultivated ground on the mountain's brow, the dwelling of a humble pair whose moral quality he extols. The mention of this worthy couple recalls to the memory of the Wanderer an adventure which befel him.

'Much was I pleased,' the grey-hair'd Wanderer said,

'When to those shining fields our notice first
You turn'd; and yet more pleased have from your lips
Gather'd this fair report of those who dwell
In that retirement; whither, by such course
Of evil hap and good as oft awaits
A lone wayfaring man, I once was brought.
Dark on my road the autumnal evening fell
While I was traversing yon mountain-pass
And night succeeded with unusual gloom,
So that my feet and hands at length became
Guides better than mine eyes — until a light
High in the gloom appear'd, too high, methought,
For human habitation; but I long'd
To reach it, destitute of other hope.
I look'd with steadiness as sailors look
On the north star, or watch-tower's distant lamp,
And saw the light, now fix'd, and shifting now,
Not like a dancing meteor, but in line
Of never-varying motion, to and fro.
"It is no night-fire of the naked hills,"
Said I — "some friendly covert must be near."
With this persuasion thitherward my steps
I turn, and reach at last the guiding light;
Joy to myself! but to the heart of her
Who there was standing on the open hill
(The same kind matron whom your tongue hath
praised),
Alarm and disappointment! The alarm
Ceased, when she learn'd through what mishap I came
And by what help had gain'd those distant fields.
Drawn from her cottage on that open height,
Bearing a lantern in her hand she stood,
Or paced the ground, to guide her husband home,
By that unwearied signal, kenn'd afar;
An anxious duty! which the lofty site,
Far from all public road or beaten way,
And traversed only by a few faint paths,
Imposes, whensoe'er untoward chance
(Such chance is rare) detains him till the night
Falls black upon the hills. "But come," she said,

"Come let me lead you to our poor abode:
Behind those rocks it stands, as if it shunn'd
In churlishness, the eye of all mankind;
But the few guests who seek the door receive
Most hearty welcome." Entering I beheld
A blazing fire — beside a cleanly hearth
Sate down; and to her office, with leave ask'd
The dame return'd. Before that glowing pile
Of mountain turf required the builder's hand
Its wasted splendour to repair, the door
Open'd and she re-enter'd with glad looks,
Her helpmate following. Hospitable fare,
Frank conversation, made the evening's treat:
Need a bewilder'd traveller wish for more?
But more was given; the eye, the mind, the heart,
Found exercise in noting as we sate
By the bright fire, the good man's face — composed
Of features elegant; an open brow
Of undisturb'd humanity; a cheek
Suffused with something of a feminine hue;
Eyes beaming courtesy and mild regard;
But, in the quicker turns of the discourse,
Expression slowly varying, that evinced
A tardy apprehension. From a fount
Lost, thought I, in the obscurities of time,
But honour'd once, these features and that mien
May have descended, though I see them here.
In such a man, so gentle and subdued,
Withal so graceful in his gentleness,
A race illustrious for heroic deeds,
Humbled, but not degraded, may expire.
This pleasing fancy (cherished and upheld
By sundry recollections of such fall
From high to low, ascent from low to high,
As books record, and even the careless mind
Cannot but notice among men and things)
Went with me to the place of my repose.

'Roused by the crowing cock at dawn of day,
I yet had risen too late to interchange

A morning salutation with my host,
Gone forth already to the far-off seat
Of his day's work. "Three dark mid-winter months
Pass" said the matron, "and I never see,
Save when the sabbath brings its kind release,
My helpmate's face by light of day. He quits
His door in darkness, nor till dusk returns.
And, through Heaven's blessing, thus we gain the
bread
For which we pray; and for the wants provide
Of sickness, accident, and helpless age.
Companions have I many; many friends,
Dependants, comforters: my wheel, my fire,
All day the house-clock ticking in mine ear,
The cackling hen, the tender chicken brood,
And the wild birds, that gather round my porch.
This honest sheep-dog's countenance I read;
With him can talk; nor seldom waste a word
On creatures less intelligent and shrewd.
And if the blustering wind that drives the clouds,
Care not for me, he lingers round my door,
And makes me pastime when our tempers suit:
But, above all, my thoughts are my support."
The matron ended, nor could I forbear
To exclaim, "O happy! yielding to the law
Of these privations, richer in the main:
While thankless thousands are oppress'd and clogg'd
By ease and leisure; by the very wealth
And pride of opportunity made poor;
While tens of thousands falter in their path,
And sink, through utter want of cheering light;
For you the hours of labour do not flag;
For you each evening hath its shining star,
And every Sabbath-day its golden sun."'

'Yes!' said the Solitary, with a smile
That seem'd to break from an expanding heart,
'The untutor'd bird may found, and so construct,
And with such soft materials line, her nest,
Fix'd in the centre of a prickly brake,

That the thorns wound her not: they only guard.
Powers, not unjustly liken'd to those gifts
Of happy instinct which the woodland bird
Shares with her species, Nature's grace sometimes
Upon the individual doth confer,
Among the higher creatures born and train'd,
To use of reason.

After further reflections drawn from contemplation of the hallow'd spot before them, the Pastor continues —

'And blest are they who sleep; and we that know,
While in a spot like this we breathe and walk,
That all beneath us by the wings are cover'd
Of motherly humanity, outspread
And gathering all within their tender shade,
Though loth and slow to come. A battle-field,
In stillness left, when slaughter is no more,
With this compared is a strange spectacle!
A rueful sight, the wild shore strewn with wrecks,
And trod by people in afflicted quest
Of friends and kindred, whom the angry sea
Restores not to their prayers! Ah, who would think
That all the scatter'd subjects which compose
Earth's melancholy vision through the space
Of all her climes, — these wretched, these depraved,
To virtue lost, insensible of peace,
From the delights of charity cut off,
To pity dead, the oppressor and the oppress'd,—
Tyrants who utter the destroying word,
And slaves who will consent to be destroy'd,—
Were of one species with the shelter'd few,
Who, with a dutiful and tender hand,
Did lodge, in an appropriated spot,
This file of infants; some that never breathed
The vital air: and others who, allow'd
That privilege, did yet expire too soon,
Or with too brief a warning, to admit
Administration of the holy rite
That lovingly consigns the babe to th' arms

Of Jesus, and his everlasting care.
These, that in trembling hope are laid apart;
And the besprinkled nursling, unrequired
Till he begins to smile upon the breast
That feeds him; and that tott'ring little one,
Taken from air and sunshine when the rose
Of infancy first blooms upon his cheek;
The thinking, thoughtless schoolboy; the bold youth,
Of soul impetuous, and the bashful maid,
Smitten while all the promises of life
Are opening round her; those of middle age,
Cast down while confident in strength they stand,
Like pillars fix'd more firmly, as might seem,
And more secure, by very weight of all
That, for support, rests on them; the decay'd
And burthensome; and, lastly, that poor few
Whose light of reason is with age extinct;
The hopeful and the hopeless, first and last,
The earliest summon'd and the longest spared,—
Are here deposited, with tribute paid,
Various; but unto each some tribute paid,
As if, amid these peaceful hills and groves,
Society were touch'd with kind concern,
And gentle "Nature grieved that one should die;"
Or, if the change demanded no regret,
Observed the liberating stroke—and bless'd.

After brief reference to the early founders of the religious institutions of this country, the Pastor concludes:

The faith partaking of those holy times,
Life, I repeat, is energy of love,
Divine or human, exercised in pain,
In strife, and tribulation, and ordain'd,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass,
Through shades and silent rest, to endless joy.'

BOOK VI.

The poet opens this book with an eloquent address to the state, and Church of England, and eulogy on the Pastor, who presently resumes his narrative with a tale of unrequited love, and points to the grave destined for the unhappy sufferer. He then gives an instance of perseverance as shown in the history of a lonely miner.

'Close to his destined habitation, lies
One whose endeavours did at length achieve
A victory less worthy of regard,
Though marvellous in its kind. A place exists
High in these mountains, that allured a band
Of keen adventurers to unite their pains,
In search of treasure there by nature form'd,
And there conceal'd; but they who tried were foil'd,
And all desisted, all, save him alone;
Who taking counsel of his own clear thoughts,
And trusting only to his own weak hands,
Urged unremittingly the stubborn work,
Unseconded, uncountenanced; then, as time
Pass'd on, while still his lonely efforts found
No recompense, derided; and at length,
By many pitied, as insane of mind;
By others dreaded as the luckless thrall
Of subterranean spirits, feeding hope
By various mockery of sight and sound;
Hope, after hope, encouraged and destroy'd.
— But when the lord of seasons had matured
The fruits of earth through space of twice ten years,
The mountain's entrails offered to the view
Of the old man, and to his trembling grasp,
His bright, his long-deferr'd, his dear reward.
Not with more transport did Columbus greet
A world, his rich discovery! But our swain,
A very hero till his point was gain'd,
Proved all unable to support the weight

Of prosperous fortune. On the fields he look'd
With an unsettled liberty of thought,
Of schemes and wishes; in the daylight walk'd
Giddy and restless; ever and anon
Quaff'd in his gratitude immoderate cups;
And truly might be said to die of joy!
He vanish'd; but conspicuous to this day
The path remains that link'd his cottage-door
To the mine's mouth; a long and slanting track,
Upon the rugged mountain's stony side,
Worn by his daily visits to and from
The darksome centre of a constant hope.
This vestige, neither force of beating rain,
Nor the vicissitudes of frost and thaw,
Shall cause to fade, till ages pass away;
And it is named, in memory of the event,
The "Path of Perseverance."'

An example follows, of abused talents, irresolution and weakness; and in this and the following Book will be found numerous incidents and traits of character of varying interest, relating to those lying in their equal rest under the green hillocks. But of these touching memorials we can only present a portion to the reader. In answer to an inquiry made by one of the party, the Pastor gives an instance of the harmonizing influence of solitude upon two men of opposite principles, who had formerly engaged in political strife.

'Yes,' said the Priest, 'the genius of our hills—
Who seems, by these stupendous barriers cast
Round his domain, desirous not alone
To keep his own, but also to exclude
All other progeny—doth sometimes lure,
Even by this studied depth of privacy,
The unhappy alien hoping to obtain
Concealment, or seduced by wish to find,
In place from outward molestation free,
Helps to internal ease. Of many such
Could I discourse; but as their stay was brief,
So their departure only left behind

Fancies and loose conjectures. Other trace
Survives, for worthy mention, of a pair
Who, from the pressure of their several fates,
Meeting as strangers, in a petty town,
Whose blue roofs ornament a distant reach
Of this far-winding vale, remain'd as friends
True to their choice; and gave their bones in trust
To this loved cemetery, here to lodge
With unescutcheon'd privacy interr'd
Far from the family vault. A chieftain one
By right of birth; within whose spotless breast
The fire of ancient Caledonia burn'd:
He, with the foremost whose impatience hail'd
The Stuart, landing to resume, by force
Of arms, the crown which bigotry had lost,
Aroused his clan; and, fighting at their head,
With his brave sword endeavour'd to prevent
Culloden's fatal overthrow. Escaped
From that disastrous rout, to foreign shores
He fled; and when the lenient hand of time
Those troubles had appeased, he sought and gain'd,
For his obscure condition, an obscure
Retreat, within this nook of English ground.

The other, born in Britain's southern tract,
Had fix'd his milder loyalty, and placed
His gentler sentiments of love and hate
There, where they placed them who in conscience prized
The new succession, as a line of kings
Whose oath had virtue to protect the land
Against the dire assaults of papacy
And arbitrary rule. But launch thy bark
On the distemper'd flood of public life,
And cause for most rare triumph will be thine,
If, spite of keenest eye and steadiest hand,
The stream, that bears thee forward, prove not, soon
Or late, a perilous master. He, who oft,
Under the battlements and stately trees
That round his mansion cast a sober gloom,

Had moralized on this and other truths
Of kindred import, pleased and satisfied,
Was forced to vent his wisdom with a sigh
Heaved from the heart in fortune's bitterness,
When he had crush'd a plentiful estate
By ruinous contest, to obtain a seat
In Britain's senate. Fruitless was th' attempt;
And while the uproar of that desperate strife
Continued yet to vibrate on his ear,
The vanquish'd Whig, beneath a *borrow'd* name
(For the mere sound and echo of his own
Haunted him with sensations of disgust
Which he was glad to lose), slunk from the world
To the deep shade of these untravell'd wilds;
In which the Scottish laird had long possess'd
An undisturb'd abode. Here, then, they met,
Two doughty champions; flaming Jacobite
And sullen Hanoverian! You might think
That losses and vexations less severe
Than those which they had severally sustain'd,
Would have inclined each to abate his zeal
For his ungrateful cause; no,—I have heard
My reverend father tell that, 'mid the calm
Of that small town encountering thus, they fill'd,
Daily, its bowling-green with harmless strife;
Plagued with uncharitable thoughts the church,
And vex'd the market-place. But in the breasts
Of these opponents gradually was wrought,
With little change of general sentiment,
Such change towards each other, that their days
By choice were spent in constant fellowship;
And if, at times, they fretted with the yoke,
Those very bickerings made them love it more.

'A favourite boundary to their lengthen'd walks
This churchyard was. And whether they had come
Treading their path in sympathy, and link'd
In social converse, or by some short space
Discreetly parted to preserve the peace
One spirit seldom fail'd to extend its sway

Over both minds, when they awhile had mark'd
The visible quiet of this holy ground,
And breathed its soothing air — the spirit of hope
And saintly magnanimity — that, spurning
The field of selfish difference and dispute,
And every care which transitory things,
Earth, and the kingdoms of the earth create,
Doth, by a rapture of forgetfulness,
Preclude forgiveness, from the praise debarr'd
Which else the Christian virtue might have claim'd.
There live who yet remember here to have seen
Their courtly figures, seated on the stump
Of an old yew, their favourite resting-place.
But, as the remnant of the long-lived tree
Was disappearing by a swift decay,
They, with joint care, determin'd to erect,
Upon its site, a dial, which should stand
For public use; and also might survive,
As their own private monument; for this
Was the particular spot in which they wish'd,
(And Heaven was pleased to accomplish the desire)
That undivided, their remains should lie.
So, where the moulder'd tree had stood, was raised
Yon structure, framing with the ascent of steps
That to the decorated pillar lead,
A work of art, more sumptuous, as might seem,
Than suits this place; yet built in no proud scorn
Of rustic homeliness; they only aim'd
To insure for it respectful guardianship.
Around the margin of the plate, whereon
The shadow falls, to note the stealthy hours,
Winds an inscriptive legend.' At these words
Thither we turn'd; and gather'd as we read,
The appropriate sense, in latin numbers couch'd: —
'Time flies; it is his melancholy task
To bring, and bear away delusive hopes,
And reproduce the troubles he destroys.
But, while his blindness thus is occupied,
Discerning mortal, do thou serve the will
Of Time's eternal Master, and that peace,

Which the world wants, shall be confirm'd!'

The Vicar paused, and tow'rds a seat advanced,
A long stone seat, framed in the churchyard wall;
Part under shady sycamore, and part
Offering a place of rest, in pleasant sunshine,
Even as may suit the comers, old or young,
Who seek the house of worship, while the bells
Yet ring with all their voices, or before
The last hath ceased its solitary knell.
To this commodious resting-place he led;
Where, by his side, we all sat down; and there
His office, uninvited, he resumed.

'As, on a sunny bank, a tender lamb
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,
Screen'd by its parent, so that little mound
Lies guarded by its neighbour; the small heap
Speaks for itself; an infant there doth rest,
The sheltering hillock is the mother's grave.
If mild discourse, and manners that conferr'd
A natural dignity on humblest rank;
If gladsome spirits, and benignant looks
That for a face not beautiful did more
Than beauty for the fairest face can do;
And if religious tenderness of heart,
Grieving for sin, and penitential tears
Shed when the clouds had gather'd and disstain'd
The spotless ether of a maiden life;
If these may make a hallow'd spot on earth
More holy in the sight of God or man;
Then, on that mound a sanctity shall brood,
Till the stars sicken at the day of doom.

'Ah! what a warning for a thoughtless man,
Could field or grove, or any spot of earth,
Show to his eye an image of the pangs
Which it hath witness'd — render back an echo
Of the sad steps by which it hath been trod!
There, by her innocent baby's precious grave

Yea, doubtless on the turf that roofs her own,
The mother oft was seen to stand, or kneel
In the broad daylight, a weeping Magdalene.
Now she is not; the swelling turf reports
Of the fresh shower, but of poor Ellen's tears
Is silent; nor is any vestige left
Upon the pathway of her mournful tread;
Nor of that pace with which she once had moved
In virgin fearlessness, a step that seem'd
Caught from the pressure of elastic turf
Upon the mountain wet with morning dew,
In the prime hour of sweetest scents and airs.
Serious and thoughtful was her mind; and yet,
By reconcilement exquisite and rare,
The form, port, motions of this cottage girl
Were such as might have quicken'd and inspired
A Titian's hand, address'd to picture forth
Oread or Dryad glancing through the shade
When first the hunter's startling horn is heard
Upon the golden hills. A spreading elm
Stands in our valley, call'd "the Joyful Tree;"
An elm distinguish'd by that festive name,
From dateless usage which our peasants hold
Of giving welcome to the first of May
By dances round its trunk. And if the sky
Permit, like honours, dance and song are paid
To the Twelfth Night, beneath the frosty stars
Or the clear moon. The queen of these gay sports,
If not in beauty yet in sprightly air,
Was hapless Ellen. No one touch'd the ground
So deftly, and the nicest maiden's locks
Less gracefully were braided; but this praise,
Methinks, would better suit another place.

'She loved, and fondly deem'd herself beloved.
The road is dim the current unperceived,
The weakness painful and most pitiful,
By which a virtuous woman, in pure youth,
May be deliver'd to distress and shame.
Such fate was hers. The last time Ellen danced

Among her equals round "the Joyful Tree,"
She bore a secret burthen; and full soon
Was left to tremble for a breaking vow,
Then, to bewail a sternly-broken vow,
Alone, within her widow'd mother's house.
It was the season sweet of budding leaves.
Of days advancing towr'ds their utmost length
And small birds singing to their happy mates.
Wild is the music of the autumnal wind
Among the faded woods; but these blithe notes
Strike the deserted to the heart; I speak
Of what I know, and what we feel within.

. . . . . .

'Twill please you to be told
That studiously withdrawing from the eye
Of all companionship, the sufferer yet
In lonely reading found a meek resource.
How thankful for the warmth of summer days,
And their long twilight! — friendly to that stealth
With which she slipp'd into the cottage barn,
And found a secret oratory there;
Or, in the garden, pored upon her book
By the last lingering help of open sky,
Till the dark night dismiss'd her to her bed.
Thus did a waking fancy sometimes lose
The unconquerable pang of despised love.

'A kindlier passion open'd on her soul
When that poor child was born. Upon its face
She look'd as on a pure and spotless gift
Of unexpected promise, where a grief
Or dread was all that had been thought of — joy
Far sweeter than bewilder'd traveller feels
Upon a perilous waste, where all night long
Through darkness he hath toil'd and fearful storm,
When he beholds the first pale speck serene
Of day-spring in the gloomy east reveal'd
And greets it with thanksgiving. "Till this hour,"

Thus in her mother's hearing Ellen spake,
"There was a stony region in my heart;
"But He, at whose command the parchèd rock
"Was smitten, and pour'd forth a quenching stream,
"Hath soften'd that obduracy, and made
"Unlook'd-for gladness in the desert place,
"To save the perishing; and, henceforth I look
"Upon the light with cheerfulness, for thee
"My infant! and for that good mother dear,
"Who bore me, and hath pray'd for me in vain;
"Yet not in vain,—it shall not be in vain."
Spake she, nor was the assurance unfulfill'd,
And if heart-rending thoughts would oft return,
They stay'd not long. The blameless infant grew;
The child whom Ellen and her mother loved
They soon were proud of; tended it and nursed,
A soothing comforter, although forlorn;
Like a poor singing-bird from distant lands;
Or a choice shrub, which he who passes by
With vacant mind, not seldom may observe
Fair-flowering in a thinly-peopled house,
Whose window, somewhat sadly it adorns.

'Through four months' space the infant drew its food
From the maternal breast: then scruples rose;
Thoughts, which the rich are free from, came and cross'd
The sweet affection. She no more could bear
By her offence to lay a twofold weight
On a kind parent willing to forget
Their slender means; so, to that parent's care
Trusting her child, she left their common home,
And with contented spirit undertook
A foster-mother's office.

'Tis, perchance,
Unknown to you that in these simple vales
The natural feeling of equality
Is by domestic service unimpar'd;
Yet, though such service be, with us, removed
From sense of degradation, not the less

The ungentle mind can easily find means
To impose severe restraints and laws unjust;
Which hapless Ellen now was doom'd to feel.

'In selfish blindness, for I will not say
In naked and deliberate cruelty,
The pair, whose infant she was bound to nurse,
Forbad her all communion with her own.
They argued that such meeting would disturb
The mother's mind, distract her thoughts, and thus
Unfit her for her duty; in which dread,
Week after week, the mandate was enforced.
So near! yet not allow'd, upon that sight
To fix her eyes — alas! 'Twas hard to bear!
But worst affliction must be borne — far worse!
For 'tis Heaven's will, that, after a disease
Begun and ended within three days' space,
Her child should die; as Ellen now exclaim'd,
Her own deserted child! Once, only once,
She saw it in that mortal malady;
And, on the burial-day, could scarcely gain
Permission to attend its obsequies.
She reach'd the house — last of the funeral train;
And some one as she enter'd, having chanced
To urge unthinkingly their prompt departure,
"Nay," said she, with commanding look, a spirit
Of anger never seen in her before,
"Nay, ye must wait my time!" and down she sate,
And by the unclosed coffin kept her seat,
Weeping and looking, looking on and weeping
Upon the last sweet slumber of her child,
Until at length her soul was satisfied.
You see the infant's grave; and to this spot
The mother, oft as she was sent abroad,
And whatso'er the errand, urged her steps;
Hither she came; and here she stood, or knelt
In the broad day — a rueful Magdalene!
So call her; for not only she bewail'd
A mother's loss, but mourn'd in bitterness
Her own transgression; penitent sincere

As ever raised to Heaven a streaming eye.
At length the parents of the foster-child,
Noting that in despite of their commands,
She still renew'd, and could not but renew,
Those visitations, ceased to send her forth ;
Or, to the garden's narrow bounds confined.
I fail'd not to remind them that they err'd ;
For holy Nature might not thus be cross'd,
Thus wrong'd in woman's breast : in vain I pleaded :
But the green stalk of Ellen's life was snapp'd,
And the flower droop'd ; as every one could see,
It hung its head in mortal languishment.
Aided by this appearance, I at length
Prevail'd ; and, from those bonds released, she went
Home to her mother's house. The youth was fled ;
The rash betrayer could not face the shame
Of sorrow which his senseless guilt had caused ;
And little would his presence, or proof given
Of a relenting soul, have now avail'd ;
For, like a shadow, he was past away
From Ellen's thoughts ; had perished to her mind
For all concerns of fear, or hope, or love,
Save only those which to their common shame,
And to his moral being, appertain'd.
Hope from that quarter would, I know, have brought
A heavenly comfort : there she recognized
An unrelaxing bond, a mutual need ;
There, and, as seem'd, there only. She had raised,
Her fond maternal heart had built, a nest
In blindness all too near the river's edge ;
That work a summer flood with hasty swell
Had swept away, and now her spirit long'd
For its flight to heaven's security.
The bodily frame was wasted day by day ;
Meanwhile, relinquishing all other cares,
Her mind she strictly tutor'd to find peace
And pleasure in endurance. Much she thought,
And much she read, and brooded feelingly
Upon her own unworthiness. To me,
As to a spiritual comforter and friend,

Her heart she opened and no pains were spared
To mitigate as gently as I could,
The sting of self-reproach with healing words.
Meek saint — through patience glorified on earth !
In whom, as by her lonely hearth she sat,
The ghastly face of cold decay put on
A sun-like beauty, and appear'd divine !
May I not mention, that, within these walls,
In due observance of her pious wish,
The congregation join'd with me in prayer
For her soul's good ? Nor was that office vain
Much did she suffer ; but if any friend,
Beholding her condition, at the sight
Gave way to words of pity or complaint,
She still'd them with a prompt reproof, and said :
" He who afflicts me knows what I can bear,
" And when I fail, and can endure no more,
" Will mercifully take me to Himself."
So, through the cloud of death her spirit pass'd
Into the pure and unknown world of love
Where injury cannot come : and here is laid
The mortal body by her infant's side.'

The vicar ceased, and downcast looks made known,
That each had listen'd with his inmost heart.
For me the emotion scarcely was less strong
Or less benign than that which I had felt
When, seated near my venerable friend,
Beneath those shady elms from him I heard
The story that retraced the slow decline
Of Margaret sinking on the lonely heath,
With the neglected house in which she dwelt.
I noted that the Solitary's cheek
Confess'd the power of nature.

Instances of heavier guilt are narrated by the Vicar, and, by way of contrast, the book concludes with details of constancy and happy married life.

BOOK VII.

In reply to questions concerning some graves lying apart from the rest, the Pastor gives an account of the clergyman of a neighbouring chapelry who was buried in one of them, and gives a vivid picture of his journey to the district: —

'Rough and forbidding were the choicest roads
By which our northern wilds could then be cross'd;
And into most of these secluded vales
Was no access for wain, heavy or light,
So, at his dwelling-place the priest arrived
With store of household goods in panniers slung
On sturdy horses graced with gingling bells,
And on the backs of more ignoble beast,
That, with like burthen of effects most prized
Or easiest carried, closed the motley train.
Young was I then, a school-boy of eight years;
But still, methinks, I see them as they pass'd
In order, drawing tow'rds their wish'd-for home.
— Rock'd by the motion of a trusty ass
Two ruddy children hung, a well-poised freight,
Each in his basket nodding drowsily;
Their bonnets, I remember, wreathed with flowers,
Which told that 'twas the pleasant month of June;
And, close behind, the comely matron rode,
A woman of soft speech and gracious smile,
And with a lady's mien. — From far they came,
Even from Northumbrian hills — yet theirs had been
A merry journey, rich in pastime, cheer'd
By music, prank, and laughter-stirring jest;
And freak put on, and arch word dropp'd, to swell
The cloud of fancy and uncouth surmise
That gather'd round the slowly-moving train.
"Whence do they come? and with what errand charg'd?
Belong they to the fortune-telling tribe
Who pitch their tents beneath the green-wood tree?
Or are they strollers furnish'd to enact

Fair Rosamond, and the Children of the Wood,
And, with that whisker'd tabby's aid, set forth
The lucky venture of sage Whittington,
When the next village hears the show announced
By blast of trumpet?" Plenteous was the growth
Of such conjectures, overheard, or seen
On many a staring countenance portray'd
Of boor or burgher, as they march'd along.
And more than once their steadiness of face
Was put to proof, and exercise supplied
To their inventive humour, by stern looks,
And questions in authoritative tone,
From some staid guardian of the public peace,
Checking the sober steed on which he rode,
In his suspicious wisdom; oftener still
By notice indirect, or blunt demand
From traveller halting in his own despite,
A simple curiosity to ease:
Of which adventures, that beguiled and cheer'd
Their grave migration, the good pair would tell,
With undiminish'd glee, in hoary age.

His career is narrated at some length and allusion is made to another priest, (as clergymen are still called in the district,) who obtained the name of 'Wonderful' among the dalesmen, and to whose virtues the poet dedicates a large space in the notes appended to the 'Excursion,' the perusal of which will repay the reader. The unpretending history of a deaf man is next given, and after that is the following interesting notice of one deprived of sight.

'Soul-cheering light, most bountiful of things!
Guide of our way, mysterious comforter!
Whose sacred influence, spread through earth and heaven,
We all too thanklessly participate,
Thy gifts were utterly withheld from him
Whose place of rest is near yon ivied porch.
Yet, of the wild brooks ask if he complain'd;

Ask of the channell'd rivers if they held
A safer, easer, more determined course.
What terror doth it strike into the mind
To think of one, who cannot see, advancing
Towards some precipice's airy brink!
But, timely warn'd, *he* would have stay'd his steps;
Protected, say enlighten'd, by his ear,
And on the very brink of vacancy
Not more endanger'd than a man whose eye
Beholds the gulf beneath. No flow'ret blooms
Throughout the lofty range of these rough hills,
Or in the woods, that could from him conceal
Its birthplace; none whose figure did not live
Upon his touch. The bowels of the earth
Enrich'd with knowledge his industrious mind;
The ocean paid him tribute from the stores
Lodged in her bosom, and by science led,
His genius mounted to the plains of heaven.
Methinks I see him; how his eyeballs roll'd
Beneath his ample brow, in darkness pair'd—
But each instinct with spirit: and the frame
Of the whole countenance alive with thought,
Fancy, and understanding; while the voice
Discoursed of natural and moral truth
With eloquence, and such authentic power,
That, in his presence, humbler knowledge stood
Abash'd, and tender pity overawed.'

Their conversation on these topics is interrupted by the passing of a waggoner and his team carrying timber. His good qualities are dwelt upon, but the Pastor adds:—

'This qualified respect, the old man's due,
Is paid without reluctance; but in truth,'
(Said the good Vicar with a fond half-smile)
'I feel at times a motion of despite
Towards one, whose bold contrivances and skill,
As you have seen, bear such conspicuous part
In works of havoc; taking from these vales,

One after one, their proudest ornaments.
Full oft his doings leave me to deplore
Tall ash-tree sown by winds, by vapours nursed,
In the dry crannies of the pendent rocks :
Light birch, aloft upon the horizon's edge,
Transparent texture, framing in the east
A veil of glory for the ascending moon ;
And oak whose roots by noontide dew were damp'd,
And on whose forehead inaccessible
The raven lodged in safety. Many a ship
Launch'd into Morecamb Bay, hath owed to him
Her strong knee-timbers, and the mast that bears
The loftiest of her pendants ; he, from park
Or forest, fetched the enormous axle-tree
That whirls (how slow itself !) ten thousand spindles.
And the vast engine labouring in the mine,
Content with meaner prowess, must have lack'd
The trunk and body of its marvellous strength,
If his undaunting enterprise had fail'd
Among the mountain coves, or keen research
In forest, park, or chase.'

Affectionate mention is then made of a young volunteer, a native of the vale, whose patriotic ardour was aroused by the threat of French invasion. His untimely end is deplored.

This spoken from his seat the Pastor rose,
And moved towards the grave. Instinctively
His steps we follow'd ; and my voice exclaim'd,
'Power to the oppressors of the world is given,
A might of which they dream not. Oh ! the curse,
To be the awakener of divinest thoughts,
Father and founder of exalted deeds ;
And, to whole nations bound in servile straits
The liberal donor of capacities
More than heroic ! this to be, nor yet
Have sense of one connatural wish, nor yet
Deserve the least return of human thanks ;
Winning no recompense but deadly hate
With pity mix'd — astonishment with scorn ! '

When these involuntary words had ceased,
The Pastor said: 'So Providence is served;
The forkèd weapon of the skies can send
Illumination into deep, dark holds,
Which the mild sunbeam hath not power to pierce.
Ye Thrones that have defied remorse, and cast
Pity away, soon shall ye quake with *fear!*
For, not unconscious of the mighty death
Which to an outrageous wrong the sufferer owes,
Europe, through all her habitable bounds
Is thirsting for *their* overthrow, who still
Exist, as pagan temples stood of old,
By very horror of their impious rites
Preserved — are suffered to extend their pride,
Like cedars on the top of Lebanon
Darkening the sun.'

A mouldering monumental stone and the faded memory of a knight who flourished in Eliza's golden days, leads to the following eloquent apostrophe: —

'So falls, so languishes, grows dim, and dies,'
The gray-hair'd Wanderer pensively exclaim'd
'All that this world is proud of. From their spheres
The stars of human glory are cast down;
Perish the roses and flowers of kings;
Princes and emperors, and the crowns and palms
Of all the mighty, wither'd and consumed!
Nor is power given to lowliest innocence
Long to protect her own. The man himself
Departs; and soon is spent the line of those
Who, in the bodily image, in the mind,
In heart in soul, in station or pursuit,
Did most resemble him. Degrees and ranks,
Fraternities and orders — heaping high
New wealth upon the burthen of the old,
And placing trust in privilege confirm'd
And re-confirm'd — are scoff'd at with a smile
Of greedy foretaste, from the secret stand
Of desolation, aim'd: to slow decline

These yield, and these to sudden overthrow;
Their virtue, service, happiness, and state
Expire; and Nature's pleasant robe of green,
Humanity's appointed shroud, enwraps
Their monuments and their memory.'

. . . . . .

'Even,' said the Wanderer, 'as that courteous knight
Bound by his vow to labour for redress
Of all who suffer wrong, and to enact
By sword and lance the law of gentleness,
(If I may venture of myself to speak,
Trusting that not incongruously I blend
Low things with lofty,) I too shall be doom'd
To outlive the kindly use and fair esteem
Of the poor calling which my youth embraced
With no unworthy prospect. But enough;
Thoughts crowd upon me — and 'twere seemlier now
To stop, and yield our gracious teacher thanks
For the pathetic records which his voice
Hath here deliver'd: words of heartfelt truth,
Tending to patience when affliction strikes;
To hope and love; to confident repose
In God; and reverence for the dust of man.'

BOOK VIII.

The Pastor, fearing to have detained them too long, invites them to his house.

At this the Solitary shrunk
With backward will; but, wanting not address
That inward motion to disguise, he said
To his compatriot, smiling as he spake,—

'The peaceable remains of this good knight
Would be disturb'd, I fear, with wrathful scorn,
If consciousness could reach him where he lies
That one, albeit of these degenerate times,
Deploring changes past, or dreading change
Foreseen, had dared to couple, even in thought,
The fine vocation of the sword and lance
With the gross aims and body-bending toil
Of a poor brotherhood who walk the earth
Pitied, and, where they are not known, despised.
Yet, by the good knight's leave, the two estates
Are graced with some resemblance. Errant those,
Exiles and wanderers; and the like are these,
Who, with their burthen, traverse hill and dale,
Carrying relief for nature's simplest wants.
What though no higher recompense they seek
Than honest maintenance, by irksome toil
Full oft procured, yet such may claim respect,
Among the intelligent, for what this course
Enables them to be and to perform,
Their tardy steps give leisure to observe
While solitude permits the mind to feel;
And doth instruct her to supply defects
By the division of her inward self,
For grateful converse: and to these poor men,
As I have heard you boast with honest pride,
Nature is bountiful; where'er they go,
Kind nature's various wealth is all their own.
Versed in the characters of men; and bound,
By tie of daily interest, to maintain
Conciliatory manners and smooth speech;
Such have been, and still are, in their degree,
Examples efficacious to refine
Rude intercourse; apt instruments to excite,
By importation of unlook'd-for arts,
Barbarian torpor, and blind prejudice;
Raising, through just gradations, savage life
To rustic, and the rustic to urbane.
Within their moving magazines is lodged
Power that comes forth to quicken and exalt

Th' affections seated in the mother's breast,
And in the lover's fancy; and to feed
The sober sympathies of long-tried friends.
By these itinerants, as experienced men,
Counsel is given; contention they appease
With healing words; and in remotest wilds,
Tears wipe away, and pleasant tidings bring;—
Could the proud quest of chivalry do more?'

The Wanderer acknowledges that if aught of romantic interest once belonged to the pedlar's calling it is now gone. He then dilates upon the change produced in the country by the spread of manufactures, whose advantages he describes, but then reverts to the darker side of the picture.

'And yet, O happy Pastor of a flock
Faithfully watch'd, and, by that loving care
And Heaven's good providence, preserved from taint!
With you I grieve, when on the darker side
Of this great change I look; and there behold,
Through strong temptation of those gainful arts,
Such outrage done to nature as compels
The indignant power to justify herself;
Yea, to avenge her violated rights,
For England's bane. When soothing darkness spreads
O'er hill and vale,' the Wanderer thus express'd
His recollections, 'and the punctual stars,
While all things else are gathering to their homes,
Advance, and in the firmament of heaven
Glitter — but undisturbing, undisturb'd,
As if their silent company were charged
With peaceful admonitions for the heart
Of all-beholding man, earth's thoughtful lord;
Then in full many a region, once like this
The assured domain of calm simplicity
And pensive quiet, an unnatural light,
Prepared for never-resting labour's eyes,
Breaks from a many-window'd fabric huge;
And at the appointed hour a bell is heard,—

Of harsher import than the curfew-knoll
That spake the Norman conqueror's stern behest,
A local summons to unceasing toil!
Disgorged are now the ministers of day;
And, as they issue from the illumined pile,
A fresh band meets them at the crowded door,
And in the courts — and where the rumbling stream,
That turns the multitude of dizzy wheels,
Glares, like a troubled spirit, in its bed
Among the rocks below. Men, maidens, youths,
Mother and little children, boys and girls
Enter, and each the wonted task resumes
Within this temple, where is offer'd up
To gain — the master idol of the realm,
Perpetual sacrifice. Even thus of old
Our ancestors, within the still domain
Of vast cathedral or conventual church,
Their vigils kept; where tapers day and night
On the dim altar burn'd continually,
In token that the house was evermore
Watching to God. Religious men were they;
Nor would their reason, tutor'd to aspire
Above this transitory world, allow
That there should pass a moment of the year
When in their land the Almighty's service ceased.

After due acknowledgement of the advantages attending this material progress, regret is expressed at the deteriorating effect it is stated to produce among the humbler classes. A lamentable account is presented of the state of the manufacturing districts, and the factory lad is thus described: —

'He is a slave to whom release comes not,
And cannot come. The boy, where'er he turns,
Is still a prisoner; when the wind is up
Among the clouds and in the ancient woods,
Or when the sun is rising in the heavens,
Quiet and calm. Behold him — in the school
Of his attainments? no: but with the air

Fanning his temple under heaven's blue arch.
His raiment, whiten'd o'er with cotton flakes,
Or locks of wool, announces whence he comes.
Creeping his gait and cowering — his lip pale —
His respiration quick and audible;
And scarcely could you fancy that a gleam
From out those languid eyes could break, or blush
Mantle upon his cheek. Is this the form,
Is that the countenance, and such the port,
Of no mean being? One who should be clothed
With dignity befitting his proud hope;
Who, in his very childhood, should appear
Sublime — from present purity and joy!
The limbs increase; but liberty of mind
Thus gone for ever, this organic frame,
Which from Heaven's bounty we receive, instinct
With light and gladsome motions, soon becomes
Dull, to the joy of her own motions dead;
And even the touch, so exquisitely pour'd
Through the whole body, with a languid will
Performs its functions; rarely competent
To impress a vivid feeling on the mind
Of what there is delightful in the breeze,
The gentle visitations of the sun,
Or lapse of liquid element — by hand,
Or foot, or lip, in summer's warmth — perceived.
— Can hope look forward to a manhood raised
On such foundations?'

The Recluse agrees with the last speaker that there is no hope for this imprisoned lad, but enquires whether there is not much ignorance and degradation to be found among the agricultural population.

'Turn we then
To Britons born and bred within the pale
Of civil polity, and early train'd
To earn, by wholesome labour in the field,
The bread they eat. A sample should I give
Of what this stock produces to enrich

And beautify the tender age of life,
A sample fairly cull'd — ye would exclaim,
Is this the whistling ploughboy whose shrill notes
Impart new gladness to the morning air?
Forgive me! if I venture to suspect
That many, sweet to hear of in soft verse,
Are of no finer frame: his joints are stiff;
Beneath a cumbrous frock that to his knees
Invests the thriving churl, his legs appear,
Fellows to those which lustily upheld
The wooden stools for everlasting use,
On which our fathers sate. And mark his brow!
Under whose shaggy canopy are set
Two eyes, not dim, but of a healthy stare;
Wide, sluggish, blank, and ignorant, and strange;
Proclaiming boldly, that they never drew
A look or motion of intelligence
From infant conning of the Christ-cross-row,
Or puzzling through a primer, line by line,
Till perfect mast'ry crown the pains at last.
What kindly warmth from touch of fost'ring hand,
What penetrating power of sun or breeze,
Shall e'er disolve the crust wherein his soul
Sleeps, like a caterpillar sheath'd in ice?
This torpor is no pitiable work
Of modern ingenuity; no town
Nor crowded city may be tax'd with aught
Of sottish vice or desperate breach of law,
To which in after-years he may be roused.'

The conversation, prolonged for a time, is at length broken off by a renewal of the Pastor's invitation to his house, to which they repair. The mansion and its inmates are pleasantly described. A radiant girl seeing their approach from an antique summer-house, descends 'light as a silver fawn,' and welcomes the Pedlar as an old friend. Two impetuous boys rush in with trophies of their success in angling, while the lady of the place receives the visitors with graceful aud dignified deportment.

BOOK IX.

'To every form of being is assigned,'
Thus calmly spoke the venerable sage,
'An *active* principle: howe'er removed
From sense and observation, it subsists
In all things, in all natures, in the stars
Of azure heaven, the unenduring clouds,
In flower and tree, in every pebbly stone
That paves the brooks, the stationary rocks,
The moving waters, and the invisible air.
Whate'er exists hath properties that spread
Beyond itself, communicating good,
A simple blessing, or with evil mix'd;
Spirit that knows no insulated spot,
No chasm, no solitude; from link to link
It circulates the soul of all the worlds.
This is the freedom of the universe;
Unfolded still the more, more visible,
The more we know, and yet is reverenced least,
And least respected, in the human mind,
Its most apparent home. The food of hope
Is meditated action; robb'd of this,
Her sole support, she languishes and dies.
We perish also: for we live by hope
And by desire; we see by the glad light,
And breathe the sweet air of futurity;
And so we live, or else we have no life.
To-morrow, nay, perchance this very hour
(For every moment has its own to-morrow),
Those blooming boys, whose hearts are almost sick
With present triumph, will be sure to find
A field before them freshen'd with the dew
Of other expectations; in which course
Their happy year spins round. The youth obeys
A like glad impulse; and so moves the man
'Mid all his apprehensions, cares, and fears;
Or so he ought to move. Ah! why in age

Do we revert so fondly to the walks
Of childhood, but that there the soul discerns
The dear memorial footsteps unimpair'd
Of her own native vigour — but for this,
That it is given her thence in age to hear
Reverberations, and a choral song,
Commingling with the incense that ascends,
Undaunted, towards the imperishable heavens,
From her own lonely altar? Do not think
That good and wise will ever be allow'd,
Though strength decay, to breathe in such estate
As shall divide them wholly from the stir
Of hopeful nature. Rightly is it said
That man descends into the vale of years;
Yet have I thought that we might also speak,
And not presumptuously, I trust, of age,
As of a final eminence, though bare
In aspect and forbidding, yet a point
On which 'tis not impossible to sit
In awful sovereignty; a place of power—
A throne, which may be liken'd unto his,
Who, in some placid day of summer, looks
Down from a mountain top,— say one of those
High peaks, that bound the vale where now we are.
Faint and diminish'd to the gazing eye,
Forest and field, and hill and dale, appear,
With all the shapes upon their surface spread.
But while the gross and visible frame of things
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,
Yea, almost on the mind itself, and seems
All unsubstantialized — how loud the voice
Of waters, with invigorated peal
From the full river in the vale below
Ascending! For on that superior height
Who sits, is disencumber'd from the press
Of near obstructions, and is privileged
To breathe in solitude, above the host
Of ever-humming insects, 'mid thin air
That suits not them. The murmur of the leaves,
Many and idle, touches not his ear:

This he is free'd from, and from thousand notes
Not less unceasing, not less vain than these
By which the finer passages of sense
Are occupied; and the soul, that would incline
To listen, is prevented or deterr'd.

'And may it not be hoped, that, placed by age
In like removal, tranquil though severe,
We are not so removed for utter loss,
But for some favour, suited to our need?
What more than this, that we thereby should gain
Fresh power to commune with th' invisible world,
And hear the mighty stream of tendency
Uttering, for elevation of our thought,
A clear, sonorous voice, inaudible
To the vast multitude, whose doom it is
To run the giddy round of vain delight,
Or fret and labour on the plain below.
But, if to such sublime ascent the hopes
Of man may rise, as to a welcome close
And termination of his mortal course,
Them only can such hope inspire whose minds
Have not been starved by absolute neglect,
Nor bodies crush'd by unremitting toil;
To whom kind Nature, therefore may afford
Proof of the sacred love she bears for all;
Whose birthright reason, therefore, may insure.'

Reference is next made to the happy lot of the two youths before noticed.

'A few short hours of each returning day,
The thriving prisoners of their village school;
And thence let loose, to seek their pleasant homes
Or range the grassy lawn in vacancy;
To breathe and to be happy.'

. . . . . .

The poet then anticipates the educational measures which have only recently been taken by our Government.

'Oh for the coming of that glorious time
When, prizing knowledge as her noblest wealth
And best protection, this imperial realm,
While she exacts allegiance, shall admit
An obligation, on her part, to *teach*
Them who are born to serve her and obey;
Binding herself by statute to secure
For all the children whom her soil maintains
The rudiments of letters, and to inform
The mind with moral and religious truth,
Both understood and practised,—so that none,
However destitute, be left to droop
By timely culture unsustain'd; or run
Into a wild disorder; or be forced
To drudge through weary life without the aid
Of intellectual implements and tools;
A savage horde among the civilized,
A servile band among the lordly free!
This right, as sacred almost as the right
To exist and be supplied with sustenance
And means of life, the lisping babe proclaims
To be inherent in him, by Heaven's will,
For the protection of his innocence:
And the rude boy—who, having overpass'd
The sinless age, by conscience is enroll'd
Yet mutinously knits his angry brow,
And lifts his wilful hand on mischief bent,
Or turns the sacred faculty of speech
To impious use—by process indirect
Declares his due, while he makes known his need.
This sacred right is fruitlessly announced,
This universal plea in vain address'd,
To eyes and ears of parents who themselves
Did, in the time of their necessity,
Urge it in vain; and, therefore, like a prayer
That from the humblest floor ascends to heaven,
It mounts to reach the State's parental ear;
Who, if indeed she own a mother's heart
And be not most unfeelingly devoid
Of gratitude to Providence, will grant

The unquestionable good — which, England, safe
From interference or external force,
May grant at leisure; without risk incurr'd
That what in wisdom for herself she doth,
Others shall e'er be able to undo.

'Look! and behold, from Calpe's sunburnt cliffs
To the flat margin of the Baltic Sea,
Long-reverenced titles cast away as weeds;
Laws overturn'd; and territory spilt,
Like fields of ice rent by the polar wind,
And forced to join in less obnoxious shapes
Which, ere they gain consistence, by a gust
Of the same breath are shatter'd and destroy'd.
Meantime the sovereignty of these fair Isles
Remains entire and indivisible;
And, if that ignorance were removed which acts
Within the compass of their several shores
To breed commotion and disquietude,
Each might preserve the beautiful repose
Of heavenly bodies shining in their spheres.
— The discipline of slavery is unknown
Amongst us, — hence the more do we require
The discipline of virtue; order else
Cannot subsist, nor confidence, nor peace.
Thus, duties rising out of good possess'd,
And prudent caution needful to avert
Impending evil, do alike require
That permanent provision should be made
For the whole people to be taught and train'd.
So shall licentiousness and black resolve
Be rooted out, and virtuous habits take
Their place; and genuine piety descend,
Like an inheritance, from age to age.

'With such foundations laid, avaunt the fear
Of numbers crowded on their native soil,
To the prevention of all healthful growth,
Through mutual injury! Rather in the law
Of increase and the mandate from above

Rejoice! — and ye have special cause for joy.
For, as the element of air affords
An easy passage to the industrious bees
Fraught with their burthens; and a way as smooth
For those ordain'd to take their sounding flight
From the throng'd hive, and settle where they list
In fresh abodes — their labour to renew;
So the wide waters, open to the power,
The will, the instincts, and appointed needs
Of Britain, do invite her to cast off
Her swarms, and in succession send them forth,
Bound to establish new communities
On every shore whose aspect favours hope
Or bold adventure; promising to skill
And perseverance their deserved reward.
Yes,' he continued, kindling as he spake,
'Change wide and deep, and silently perform'd,
This land shall witness; and, as days roll on,
Earth's universal frame shall feel th' effect,
Even till the smallest habitable rock,
Beaten by lonely billows, hear the song
Of humanized society; and bloom
With civil arts, and send their fragrance forth,
A grateful tribute to all-ruling Heaven.
From culture, universally bestow'd
On Britain's noble race in freedom born,
Expect these mighty issues; from the pains
And quiet care of unambitious schools,
Instructing simple childhood's ready ear,
Thence look for these magnificent results!
Vast the circumference of hope — and ye
Are at its centre, British lawgivers;
Ah! sleep not there in shame! Shall Wisdom's voice,
From out the bosom of these troubled times
Repeat the dictates of her calmer mind,
And shall the venerable halls ye fill
Refuse to echo the sublime decree?
Trust not to partial care a general good;
Transfer not to futurity a work
Of urgent need. Your country must complete

Her glorious destiny. Begin even now,
Now, when oppression, like th' Egyptian plague
Of darkness stretch'd o'er guilty Europe, makes
The brightness more conspicuous, that invests
The happy island where ye think and act;
Now when destruction is a prime pursuit,
Show to the wretched nations for what end
The powers of civil polity were given.'

Abruptly here, but with a graceful air,
The sage broke off. No sooner had he ceased
Than, looking forth, the gentle lady said,
'Behold, the shades of afternoon have fallen
Upon this flow'ry slope; and see — beyond —
The lake, though bright, is of a placid blue,
As if preparing for the peace of evening.
How temptingly the landscape shines! The air
Breathes invitation; easy is the walk
To the lake's margin, where a boat lies moor'd
Beneath a shelt'ring tree.' Upon this hint
We rose together; all were pleased; but most
The beauteous girl, whose cheek was flushed with joy.
Light as a sunbeam glides along the hills
She vanish'd — eager to impart the scheme
To her loved brother and his shy compeer.
Now was there bustle in the Vicar's house
And earnest preparation. Forth we went,
And down the valley on the streamlet's bank
Pursued our way a broken company,
Mute or conversing, single or in pairs.
Thus having reach'd a bridge, that overarch'd
The hasty rivulet, where it lay becalm'd
In a deep pool, by happy chance we saw
A twofold image; on a grassy bank
A snow-white ram, and in the crystal flood
Another and the same! Most beautiful,
On the green turf, with his imperial front
Shaggy and bold, and wreathèd horns superb,
The breathing creature stood; as beautiful,
Beneath him, show'd his shadowy counterpart.

Each had his glowing mountains, each his sky,
And each seem'd centre of his own fair world:
Antipodes unconscious of each other,
Yet, in partition, with their several spheres,
Blended in perfect stillness, to our sight!

'Ah! what a pity were it to disperse,
Or disturb so fair a spectacle,
And yet a breath can do it!

Entering the boat, they row to a rocky island crowned with fir trees.

'One spirit animating old and young,
A gipsy fire we kindled on the shore
Of the fair isle with birch-trees fringed — and there,
Merrily seated in a ring, partook
The beverage drawn from China's fragrant herb.
Launch'd from our hands, the smooth stone skimm'd the lake;
With shouts we roused the echoes; stiller sounds
The lovely girl supplied,— a simple song,
Whose low tones reach not to the distant rocks
To be repeated there, but gently sank
Into our hearts, and charm'd the peaceful flood,
Rapaciously we gather'd flow'ry spoils
From land and water; lilies of each hue —
Golden and white, that float upon the waves,
And court the wind; and leaves of that shy plant
(Her flowers were shed), the lily of the vale,
That loves the ground, and from the sun witholds
Her pensive beauty; from the breeze her sweets.

'Such product and such pastime, did the place
And season yield; but, as we re-embarked,
Leaving, in quest of other scenes, the shore
Of that wild spot, the Solitary said
In a low voice, yet careless who might hear,
'The fire that burn'd so brightly to our wish,
Where is it now? Deserted on the beach

It seems extinct; nor shall the fanning breeze
Revive its ashes. What care we for this,
Whose ends are gain'd? Behold an emblem here
Of one day's pleasure, and all mortal joys!
And, in this unpremeditated slight
Of that which is no longer needed, see
The common course of human gratitude!'

Skirting the lake and observing the various beauties of its shore, they land upon a natural pier formed by projecting rock.

'Alert to follow as the Pastor led
We clomb a green hill's side, and thence obtain'd
Slowly, a less and less obstructed sight
Of the flat meadows and indented coast
Of the whole lake, in compass seen: far off
And yet conspicuous, stood the old church-tower,
In majesty presiding o'er the vale
And all her dwellings; seemingly preserved
From the intrusion of a restless world
By rocks impassable and mountains huge.

. . . . . .

Already had the sun,
Sinking with less than ordinary state,
Attain'd his western bound; but rays of light—
Now suddenly diverging from the orb,
Retired behind the mountain tops or veil'd
By the dense air—shot upwards to the crown
Of the blue firmament—aloft and wide;
And multitudes of little floating clouds,
Through their ethereal texture pierced—ere we,
Who saw, of change were conscious, had become
Vivid as fire—clouds separately poised,
Innumerable multitude of forms
Scatter'd through half the circle of the sky;
And giving back, and shedding each on each,
With prodigal communion, the bright hues

Which from the unapparent fount of glory
They had imbibed, and ceased not to receive.
That which the heavens display'd, the liquid deep
Repeated; but with unity sublime!

While from the grassy mountain's open side
We gazed in silence hush'd, with eyes intent
On the refulgent spectacle, diffused
Through earth, sky, water, and all visible space,
The Priest, in holy transport, thus exclaim'd:—
'Eternal Spirit! universal God!
Power inaccessible to human thought
Save by degrees and steps which Thou hast deign'd
To furnish; for this image of Thyself,
To the infirmity of mortal sense
Vouchsafed; this local, transitory type
Of thy paternal splendours, and the pomp
Of those who fill thy courts in highest heaven,
The radiant cherubim;—accept the thanks
Which we, thy humble creatures, here convened,
Presume to offer; we, who from the breast
Of the frail earth, permitted to behold
The faint reflections only of thy face,
Are yet exalted, and in soul adore!
Such as they are who in thy presence stand
Unsullied, incorruptible, and drink
Imperishable majesty streamed forth
From thy empyreal throne, the elect of earth
Shall be—divested at the appointed hour
Of all dishonour—cleansed from mortal stain.
Accomplish, then, their number; and conclude
Time's weary course! Or if, by thy decree,
The consummation that will come by stealth
Be yet far distant, let thy Word prevail,
Oh! let thy Word prevail, to take away
The sting of human nature. Spread the law,
As it is written in thy holy book,
Throughout all lands; let every nation hear
The high behest, and every heart obey:
Both for the love of purity, and hope

Which it affords, to such as do thy will
And persevere in good, that they shall rise,
To have a nearer view of Thee in heaven.
Father of good! this prayer in bounty grant,
In mercy grant it to thy wretched sons.
Then, nor till then, shall persecution cease,
And cruel wars expire. The way is mark'd,
The guide appointed, and the ransom paid.
Alas! the nations, who of yore received
These tidings, and in Christian temples meet
The sacred truth to acknowledge, linger still;
Preferring bonds of darkness to a state
Of holy freedom, by redeeming love
Proffer'd to all, while yet on earth detain'd.
So fare the many; and the thoughtful few,
Who, in the anguish of their souls, bewail
This dire perverseness, cannot choose but ask,
Shall it endure? Shall enmity and strife,
Falsehood and guile, be left to sow their seed;
And the kind never perish? Is the hope
Fallacious, or shall righteousness obtain
A peaceable dominion, wide as earth,
And ne'er to fail? Shall that blest day arrive
When they, whose choice or lot it is to dwell
In crowded cities, without fear shall live
Studious of mutual benefit — and he,
Whom morning wakes, among sweet dews and flowers
Of every clime, to till the lonely field,
Be happy in himself? The law of faith,
Working through love, such conquest shall it gain,
Such triumph over sin and guilt achieve?
Almighty Lord, thy further grace impart!
And with that help the wonder shall be seen
Fulfill'd, the hope accomplish'd; and thy praise
Be sung with transport and unceasing joy.

'Once, while the name Jehovah was a sound
Within the circuit of this sea-girt isle
Unheard, the savage nations bow'd their heads
To gods delighting in remorseless deeds;

Gods which themselves had fashion'd to promote
Ill purposes, and flatter foul desires.
Then, in the bosom of yon mountain cove,
To those inventions of corrupted man
Mysterious rites were solemnized; and there,
Amid impending rocks and gloomy woods,
Of those dread idols, some, perchance, received
Such dismal service, that the loudest voice
Of the swoln cataracts (which now are heard
Soft murmuring) was too weak to overcome,
Though aided by wild winds, the groans and shrieks
Of human victims, offered up to appease
Or to propitiate. And, if living eyes
Had visionary faculties to see
The thing that hath been as the thing that is,
Aghast we might behold this spacious mere
Bedimm'd with smoke, in wreaths voluminous,
Flung from the body of devouring fires,
To Taranis erected on the heights
By priestly hands, for sacrifice perform'd
Exultingly, in view of open day
And full assemblage of a barbarous host;
Or to Andates, female power? who gave
(For they so fancied) glorious victory.
A few rude monuments of mountain stone
Survive; all else is swept away. — How bright
The appearances of things! From such how changed
The existing worship; and, with those compared,
The worshippers how innocent and blest!
So wide a difference, a willing mind
At this affecting hour might almost think
That paradise, the lost abode of man,
Was raised again; and to a happy few,
In its original beauty, here restored.

'Whence but from Thee, the true and only God,
And from the faith derived through him who bled
Upon the cross, this marvellous advance
Of good from evil; as if one extreme
Were left — the other gain'd. O ye, who come

To kneel devoutly in yon reverend pile,
Call'd to such office by the peaceful sound
Of sabbath bells; and ye who sleep in earth,
All cares forgotten, round its hallow'd walls!
For you, in presence of this little band
Gather'd together on the green hill-side
Your Pastor is embolden'd to prefer
Vocal thanksgivings to the eternal King;
Whose love, whose counsel, whose commands have made
Your very poorest rich in peace of thought
And in good works; and him, who is endow'd,
With scantiest knowledge, master of all truth
Which the salvation of his soul requires.
Conscious of that abundant favour shower'd
On you, the children of my humble care;
On your abodes, 'mid this beloved land,
Our birthplace, home, and country, while on earth
We sojourn, — loudly do I utter thanks
With earnest joy, that will not be suppress'd.
These barren rocks, your stern inheritance;
These fertile fields, that recompense your pains;
The shadowy vale, the sunny mountain top;
Woods waving in the wind their lofty heads,
Or hush'd; the roaring waters, or the still; —
They see the offering of my lifted hands —
They hear my lips present their sacrifice —
They know if I be silent, morn or even:
For though in whispers speaking, the full heart
Will find a vent; and thought is praise to Him,
Audible praise to Thee, omniscient Mind,
From whom all gifts descend, all blessings flow!'

This vesper service closed, without delay,
From that exalted station, to the plain
Descending, we pursued our homeward course,
In mute composure, o'er the shadowy lake,
Beneath a faded sky. No trace remain'd
Of those celestial splendours: grey the vault,
Pure, cloudless ether; and the star of eve

Was wanting; but inferior lights appear'd
Faintly, too faint almost for sight; and some
Above the darken'd hills stood boldly forth
In twinkling lustre, ere the boat attain'd
Her mooring-place; where, to the sheltering tree,
Our youthful voyagers bound fast her prow,
With prompt yet careful hands. This done, we paced
The dewy fields; but ere the Vicar's door
Was reach'd, the Solitary check'd his steps;
Then, intermingling thanks, on each bestow'd
A farewell salutation, and the like
Receiving, took the slender path that leads
To the one cottage in the lonely dell,
His chosen residence. But, ere he turn'd
Aside, a welcome promise had been given
That he would share the pleasures and pursuits
Of yet another summer's day, consumed
In wandering with us through the valleys fair,
And o'er the mountain wastes, 'Another sun,'
Said he, 'shall shine upon us ere we part,
Another sun, and peradventure more;
If time, with free consent, be yours to give,
And season favours.'

To enfeebled power,
From this communion with uninjured minds,
What renovation had been brought; and what
Degree of healing to a wounded spirit,
Dejected, and habitually disposed
To seek, in degradation of the kind,
Excuse and solace for her own defects;
How far those erring notions were reform'd;
And whether aught, of tendency as good
And pure, from further intercourse ensued;
This (if delightful hopes, as heretofore,
Inspire the serious song, and gentle hearts
Cherish, and lofty minds approve the past)
My future labours may not leave untold.

THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE.

THE WHITE DOE OF RYLSTONE:

OR,

THE FATE OF THE NORTONS.

'Weak is the will of man, his judgment blind;
Remembrance persecutes, and Hope betrays;
Heavy is woe; and joy, for human kind,
A mournful thing, — so transient is the blaze!' —
Thus might *he* paint our lot of mortal days
Who wants the glorious faculty, assign'd
To elevate the more than reasoning mind,
And colour life's dark cloud with orient rays.
Imagination is that sacred power,
Imagination lofty and refined:
'Tis hers to pluck the amaranthine flower
Of faith, and round the sufferer's temples bind
Wreaths that endure affliction's heaviest shower,
And do not shrink from sorrow's keenest wind:

In trellis'd shed with clustering roses gay,
And MARY! oft beside our blazing fire,
When years of wedded life were as a day
Whose current answers to the heart's desire,
Did we together read in Spenser's lay
How Una, sad of soul — in sad attire,
The gentle Una, born of heavenly birth,
To seek her Knight went wandering o'er the earth.

Ah, then, belovèd ! pleasing was the smart,
And the tears precious, in compassion shed
For her, who, pierced by sorrow's thrilling dart,
Did meekly bear the pang unmerited ;
Meek as that emblem of her lowly heart
The milk-white lamb which in a line she led, —
And faithful, loyal in her innocence,
Like the brave lion slain in her defence.

Notes could we hear as of a fairy shell
Attuned to words with sacred wisdom fraught ;
Free fancy prized each specious miracle,
And all its finer inspiration caught ;
Till, in the bosom of our rustic cell
We by a lamentable change were taught
That 'bliss with mortal man may not abide :' —
How nearly joy and sorrow are allied !

For us the stream of fiction ceased to flow,
For us the voice of melody was mute,
— But, as soft gales dissolve the dreary snow
And give the timid herbage leave to shoot,
Heaven's breathing influence fail'd not to bestow
A timely promise of unlook'd-for fruit,
Fair fruit of pleasure and serene content
From blossoms wild of fancies innocent.

It soothed us — it beguiled us — then, to hear
Once more of troubles wrought by magic spell ;
And griefs whose aery motion comes not near
The pangs that tempt the spirit to rebel ;
Then, with mild Una in her sober cheer,
High over hill and low adown the dell
Again we wander'd, willing to partake
All that she suffer'd for her dear lord's sake.

Then, too, this song of *mine* once more could please,
Where anguish, strange as dreams of restless sleep,
Is temper'd and allay'd by sympathies
Aloft ascending, and descending deep,
Even to the inferior kinds ; whom forest trees
Protect from beating sunbeams, and the sweep
Of the sharp winds ; — fair creatures ! — to whom Heaven
A calm and sinless life, with love, hath given.

This tragic story cheer'd us ; for it speaks
Of female patience winning firm repose ;
And of the recompense which conscience seeks,
A bright, encouraging example shows ;
Needful when o'er wide realms the tempest breaks,
Needful amid life's ordinary woes ;—
Hence, not for them unfitted who would bless
A happy hour with holier happiness.

He serves the Muses erringly and ill,
Whose aim is pleasure light and fugitive ;
O, that my mind were able to fulfil
The comprehensive mandate which they give—
Vain aspiration of an earnest will !
Yet in this moral strain a power may live,
Belovèd wife ! such solace to impart
As it hath yielded to thy tender heart.

RYDAL MOUNT, WESTMORLAND,
April 20, 1815.

CANTO FIRST.

FROM Bolton's old monastic tower
The bells ring loud with gladsome power ;
The sun is bright ; the fields are gay
With people in their best array
Of stole and doublet, hood and scarf,
Along the banks of the crystal Wharf,
Through the vale retired and lowly,
Trooping to that summons holy.
And, up among the moorlands, see
What sprinklings of blithe company—
Of lasses and of shepherd grooms.
That down the steep hills force their way,
Like cattle through the budded brooms ;
Path, or no path, what care they !
And thus in joyous mood they hie
To Bolton's mouldering Priory.

What would they there? Full fifty years
That sumptuous pile, with all its peers,
Too harshly hath been doom'd to taste
The bitterness of wrong and waste:
Its courts are ravaged; but the tower
Is standing, with a voice of power,
That ancient voice which wont to call
To mass or some high festival.
And in the shatter'd fabric's heart
Remaineth one protected part;
A rural chapel, neatly dress'd,
In covert like a little nest;
This sabbath day, for praise and prayer.
And thither young and old repair.

Fast the churchyard fills; anon
Look again, and they all are gone:
The cluster round the porch, and the folk
Who sate in the shade of the Prior's Oak!
And scarcely have they disappear'd
Ere the prelusive hymn is heard:
With one consent the people rejoice,
Filling the church with a lofty voice!
They sing a service which they feel:
For 'tis the sunrise now of zeal,
And faith and hope are in their prime,
In great Eliza's golden time.

A moment ends the fervent din,
And all is hush'd, without and within;
For, though the priest more tranquilly
Recites the holy liturgy,
The only voice which you can hear
Is the river murmuring near.
When soft! the dusky trees between,
And down the path through the open green,
Where is no living thing to be seen,
And through yon gateway, where is found,
Beneath the arch with ivy bound.
Free entrance to the churchyard ground,

And right across the verdant sod
Towards the very house of God,
Comes gliding in with lovely gleam,
Comes gliding in serene and slow,
Soft and silent as a dream,
A solitary Doe!
White she is as lily of June,
And beauteous as the silver moon
When out of sight the clouds are driven,
And she is left alone in heaven;
Or like a ship some gentle day
In sunshine sailing far away,
A glittering ship, that hath the plain
Of ocean for her own domain.

Lie silent in your graves, ye dead!
Lie quiet in your churchyard bed!
Ye living tend your holy cares,
Ye multitude pursue your prayers,
And blame not me if my heart and sight
Are occupied with one delight!
'Tis a work for sabbath hours
If I with this bright creature go:
Whether she be of forest bowers,
From the bowers of earth below;
Or a spirit, for one day given,
A gift of grace from purest heaven.

What harmonious pensive changes
Wait upon her as she ranges
Round and through this pile of state,
Overthrown and desolate!
Now a step or two her way
Is through space of open day,
Where the enamour'd sunny light
Brightens her that was so bright;
Now doth a delicate shadow fall,
Falls upon her like a breath,
From some lofty arch or wall,
As she passes underneath;

Now some gloomy nook partakes
Of the glory that she makes,—
High-ribb'd vault of stone, or cell
With perfect cunning framed as well
Of stone, and ivy, and the spread
Of the elder's bushy head;
Some jealous and forbidding cell,
That doth the living stars repel,
And where no flower hath leave to dwell.

The presence of this wandering doe
Fills many a damp obscure recess
With lustre of a saintly show;
And, re-appearing, she no less
To the open day gives blessedness.
But say, among these holy places,
Which thus assiduously she paces,
Comes she with a votary's task,
Rite to perform, or boon to ask?
Fair pilgrim! harbours she a sense
Of sorrow, or of reverence?
Can she be grieved for quire or shrine,
Crush'd as if by wrath divine?
For what survives of house where God
Was worshipp'd, or where man abode—
For old magnificence undone—
Or for the gentler work begun
By Nature, softening and concealing,
And busy with a hand of healing,—
The altar, whence the cross was rent,
Now rich with mossy ornament,—
The dormitory's length laid bare,
Where the wild-rose blossoms fair;
And sapling ash, whose place of birth
Is that lordly chamber's hearth?
She sees a warrior carved in stone,
Among the thick weeds stretch'd alone;
A warrior, with his shield of pride
Cleaving humbly to his side,
And hands in resignation press'd,

Palm to palm, on his tranquil breast :
Methinks she passeth by the sight,
As a common creature might ;
If she be doom'd to inward care,
Or service, it must lie elsewhere,
But hers are eyes serenely bright,
And on she moves, with pace how light !
Nor spares to stoop her head, and taste
The dewy turf with flowers bestrown ;
And in this way she fares, till at last
Beside the ridge of a grassy grave
In quietness she lays her down ;
Gently as a weary wave
Sinks, when the summer breeze hath died,
Against an anchor'd vessel's side ;
Even so, without distress, doth she
Lie down in peace, and lovingly.

The day is placid in its going,
To a lingering motion bound,
Like the river in its flowing :
Can there be a softer sound ?
So the balmy minutes pass,
While this radiant creatures lies
Couch'd upon the dewy grass,
Pensively with downcast eyes.
When now again the people rear
A voice of praise with awful cheer !
It is the last, the parting song ;
And from the temple forth they throng —
And quickly spread themselves abroad —
While each pursues his several road.
But some, a variegated band
Of middle-aged, and old, and young,
And little children by the hand
Upon their leading mothers hung,
Turn, with obeisance gladly paid,
Towards the spot, where full in view,
The lovely doe of whitest hue,
Her sabbath couch has made.

It was a solitary mound;
Which two spears' length of level ground
Did from all other graves divide:
As if in some respect of pride;
Or melancholy's sickly mood,
Still shy of human neighbourhood;
Or guilt, that humbly would express
A penitential loneliness.

'Look, there she is, my child! draw near;
She fears not — wherefore should we fear?
She means no harm;' — but still the boy,
To whom the words were softly said,
Hung back, and smiled, and blush'd for joy,
A shame-faced blush of glowing red!
Again the mother whispered low,
'Now you have seen the famous Doe;
From Rylstone she hath found her way
Over the hills this sabbath-day;
Her work, whate'er it be, is done,
And she will depart when we are gone;
Thus doth she keep, from year to year,
Her sabbath morning, foul or fair.'

This whisper soft repeats what he
Had known from early infancy.
Bright is the creature — as in dreams
The boy had seen her — yea more bright —
But is she truly what she seems?
He asks with insecure delight,
Asks of himself — and doubts — and still
The doubt returns against his will:
Though he, and all the standers by,
Could tell a tragic history
Of facts divulged, wherein appear
Substantial motive, reason clear,
Why thus the milk-white doe is found
Couchant beside that lonely mound;
And why she duly loves to pace
The circuit of this hallow'd place.

Nor to the child's inquiring mind
Is such perplexity confined :
For spite of sober Truth, that sees
A world of fix'd remembrances
Which to this mystery belong,
If, undeceived, my skill can trace
The characters of every face,
There lack not strange delusions here,
Conjecture vague, and idle fear,
And superstitious fancies strong,
Which do the gentle creature wrong.

That bearded, staff-supported sire
(Who in his youth had often fed
Full cheerily on convent bread,
And heard old tales by the convent fire,
And lately hath brought home the scars
Gather'd in long and distant wars),
That old man — studious to expound
The spectacle — hath mounted high
To days of dim antiquity ;
When Lady Aäliza mourn'd
Her son, and felt in her despair,
The pang of unavailing prayer ;
Her son in Wharf's abysses drown'd,
The noble Boy of Egremound.
From which affliction, when God's grace
At length had in her heart found place,
A pious structure, fair to see,
Rose up — this stately Priory !
The lady's work — but now laid low ;
To the grief of her soul that doth come and go,
In the beautiful form of this innocent Doe ;
Which, though seemingly doom'd in its breast to sustain
A soften'd remembrance of sorrow and pain,
Is spotless, and holy, and gentle, and bright,
And glides o'er the earth like an angel of light.

Pass, pass who will, yon chantry door,

And, through the chink in the fractured floor
Look down, and see a grisly sight;
A vault where the bodies are buried upright!
There face by face, and hand by hand,
The Claphams and Mauleverers stand;
And, in his place, among son and sire,
Is John de Clapham, that fierce esquire,
A valiant man, and a name of dread,
In the ruthless wars of the White and Red;
Who dragg'd Earl Pembroke from Banbury church,
And smote off his head on the stones of the porch!
Look down among them, if you dare;
Oft does the white doe loiter there,
Prying into the darksome rent;
Nor can it be with good intent;
So thinks that dame of haughty air,
Who hath a page her book to hold,
And wears a frontlet edged with gold.
Well may her thoughts be harsh; for she
Numbers among her ancestry
Earl Pembroke, slain so impiously!

That slender youth, a scholar pale,
From Oxford come to his native vale,
He also hath his own conceit:
It is, thinks he, the gracious fairy
Who loved the shepherd lord to meet
In his wanderings solitary;
Wild notes she in his hearing sang,
A song of Nature's hidden powers,
That whistled like the wind, and rang
Among the rocks and holly bowers.
'Twas said that she all shapes could wear,
And oftentimes before him stood,
Amid the trees of some thick wood,
In semblance of a lady fair,
And taught him signs, and show'd him sights,
In Craven's dens, on Cumbrian heights;
When under cloud of fear he lay,
A shepherd clad in homely grey,

Nor left him at his later day.
And hence, when he, with spear and shield,
Rode, full of years, to Flodden field,
His eye could see the hidden spring,
And how the current was to flow ;
The fatal end of Scotland's king,
And all that hopeless overthrow.
But not in wars did he delight,
This Clifford wish'd for worthier might ;
Nor in broad pomp, or courtly state ;
Him his own thoughts did elevate,
Most happy in the shy recess
Of Barden's humble quietness.
And choice of studious friends had he
Of Bolton's dear fraternity,
Who, standing on this old church tower,
In many a calm propitious hour,
Perused, with him, the starry sky ;
Or in their cells with him did pry
For other lore, through strong desire
Searching the earth with chemic fire ;
But they and their good works are fled,
And all is now disquieted —
And peace is none, for living or dead !

Ah, pensive scholar ! think not so,
But look again at the radiant Doe !
What quiet watch she seems to keep,
Alone, beside that grassy heap !

Why mention other thoughts unmeet
For vision so composed and sweet ?
While stand the people in a ring,
Gazing, doubting, questioning ;
Yea, many overcome, in spite,
Of recollections clear and bright,
Which yet do unto some impart
An undisturb'd repose of heart.
And all the assembly own a law
Of orderly respect and awe ;

But see! they vanish, one by one;
And last, the Doe herself is gone.

Harp! we have been full long beguiled
By busy dreams and fancies wild,
To which, with no reluctant strings,
Thou hast attuned thy murmurings;
And now before this pile we stand
In solitude and utter peace:
But, harp! thy murmurs may not cease,—
Thou hast breeze-like visitings;
For a spirit with angel wings
Hath touch'd thee, and a spirit's hand:
A voice is with us — a command
To chant, in strains of heavenly glory,
A tale of tears, a mortal story!

CANTO SECOND.

The Harp in lowliness obeyed;
And first we sang of the green-wood shade
And a solitary Maid;
Beginning, where the song must end,
With her, and with her sylvan Friend;
The Friend who stood before her sight,
Her only unextinguished light;
Her last companion in a dearth
Of love, upon a hopeless earth.
For she it was — this Maid who wrought
Meekly, with foreboding thought,
In vermeil colours and in gold,
An unbless'd work, which, standing by,
Her father did with joy behold,
Exulting in the imagery;
A banner — one that did fulfil
Too perfectly his headstrong will:
For on this banner had her hand

Embroider'd (such was the command)
The sacred cross, and figured there
The five dear wounds our Lord did bear;
Full soon to be uplifted high,
And float in rueful company!

It was the time when England's Queen
Twelve years had reign'd, a Sovereign dread;
Nor yet the restless crown had been
Disturb'd upon her virgin head;
But now the inly-working North
Was ripe to send its thousands forth.
A potent vassalage, to fight
In Percy's and in Neville's right,
Two earls fast leagued in discontent,
Who gave their wishes open vent,
And boldly urged a general plea,—
The rites of ancient piety
To be by force of arms renew'd;
Glad prospect for the multitude!
And that same banner, on whose breast
The blameless lady had express'd
Memorials chosen to give life
And sunshine to a dangerous strife;
This banner waiting for the call,
Stood quietly in Rylstone Hall.

It came—and Francis Norton said,
'O father! rise not in this fray,—
The hairs are white upon your head:
Dear father! hear me when I say
It is for you too late a day.
Bethink you of your own good name;
A just and gracious Queen have we,
A pure religion, and the claim
Of peace on our humanity.
'Tis meet that I endure your scorn;
I am your son, your oldest born;
But not for lordship or for land,
My father, do I clasp your knees,

The banner, touch not, stay your hand,
This multitude of men disband,
And live at home in blameless ease;
For these my brethren's sake, for me;
And, most of all, for Emily!'

Tumultuous noises filled the hall;
And scarcely could the Father hear
That name — pronounced with a dying fall —
The name of his only Daughter dear;
And on the banner which stood near
He glanced a look of holy pride,
And his wet eyes were glorified;
Then seized the staff, and thus did say:
'Thou, Richard, bear'st thy father's name,
Keep thou this ensign till the day
When I of thee require the same;
Thy place be on my better hand;
And seven as true as thou, I see,
Will cleave to this good cause and me.'
He spake, and eight brave sons straightway
All follow'd him, a gallant band!

Forth when sire and sons appear'd,
A gratulating shout was rear'd,
With din of arms and minstrelsy,
From all his warlike tenantry,
All horsed and harness'd with him to ride;
A shout to which the hills replied!

But Francis, in the vacant hall,
Stood silent — under dreary weight, —
A phantasm, in which roof and wall
Shook, totter'd, swam before his sight,
A phantasm like a dream of night.
Thus overwhelm'd, and desolate,
He found his way to a postern-gate;
And, when he waked at length, his eye
Was on the calm and silent sky.
With air about him breathing sweet,

And earth's green grass beneath his feet;
Nor did he fail ere long to hear
A sound of military cheer,
Faint, but it reach'd that shelter'd spot;
He heard, and it disturb'd him not.

There stood he, leaning on a lance
Which he had grasp'd unknowingly,—
Had blindly grasp'd, in that strong trance,
That dimness of heart agony;
There stood he, cleansed from the despair
And sorrow of his fruitless prayer.
The past he calmly hath review'd;
But where will be the fortitude
Of this brave man, when he shall see
That form beneath the spreading tree,
And know that it is Emily?
Oh! hide them from each other,—hide,
Kind Heaven, this pair severely tried!

He saw her, where in open view
She sate, beneath the spreading yew,
Her head upon her lap, concealing
In solitude her bitter feeling:
How could he choose but shrink or sigh;
He shrunk, and mutter'd inwardly,
'Might ever son *command* a sire.
The act were justified to-day.'
This to himself—and to the maid,
Whom now he had approach'd, he said,
'Gone are they,—they have their desire;
And I with thee one hour will stay,
To give thee comfort if I may.'

He paused, her silence to partake,
And long it was before he spake:
Then, all at once, his thoughts turn'd round,
And fervent words a passage found.

'Gone are they, bravely, though misled,

With a dear father at their head!
The sons obey a natural lord;
The father had given a solemn word
To Noble Percy, — and a force
Still stronger bends him to his course.
This said, our tears to-day may fall
As at an innocent funeral.
In deep and awful channel runs
This sympathy of sire and sons;
Untried our brothers were beloved,
And now their faithfulness is proved;
For faithful we must call them, bearing
That soul of conscientious daring.
There were they all in circle — there
Stood Richard, Ambrose, Christopher,
John with a sword that will not fail,
And Marmaduke in fearless mail,
And those bright twins were side by side;
And there, by fresh hopes beautified,
Was he, whose arm yet lacks the power
Of man, our youngest, fairest flower!
I, in the right of eldest-born
And in a second father's place,
Presumed to stand against their scorn,
And meet their pity face to face;
Yea, trusting to God's holy aid,
I to my father knelt and pray'd;
And one, the pensive Marmaduke,
Methought, was yielding inwardly,
And would have laid his purpose by,
But for a glance of his father's eye,
Which I myself could scarcely brook.

'Then be we, each, and all, forgiven!
Thee, chiefly thee, my sister dear,
Whose pangs are register'd in heaven, —
The stifled sigh, the hidden tear,
And smiles, that dared to take their place,
Meek filial smiles, upon thy face,
As that unhallow'd banner grew

Beneath a loving old man's view.
Thy part is done — thy painful part;
Be thou then satisfied in heart!
A further, though far easier task
Than thine hath been, my duties ask;
With theirs my efforts cannot blend,
I cannot for such cause contend;
Their aims I utterly forswear;
But I in body will be there.
Unarm'd and naked will I go,
Be at their side, come weal or woe:
On kind occasions I may wait,
See, hear, obstruct, or mitigate.
Bare breast I take and an empty hand.' —
Therewith he threw away the lance
Which he had grasp'd in that strong trance.
Spurn'd it — like something that would stand
Between him and the pure intent
Of love on which his soul was bent.

'For thee, for thee, is left the sense
Of trial past without offence
To God or man; such innocence,
Such consolation, and the excess
Of an unmerited distress;
In that thy very strength must lie.
O sister, I could prophesy!
The time is come that rings the knell
Of all we loved, and loved so well.
Hope nothing, if I thus may speak
To thee a woman, and thence weak;
Hope nothing, I repeat; for we
Are doom'd to perish utterly:
'Tis meet that thou with me divide
The thought while I am by thy side,
Acknowledging a grace in this,
A comfort in the dark abyss:
But look not for me when I'm gone,
And be no further wrought upon.
Farewell all wishes, all debate,

All prayers for this cause, or for that!
Weep, if that aid thee; but depend
Upon no help of outward-friend;
Espouse thy doom at once, and cleave
To fortitude without reprieve,
For we must fall, both we and ours,
This mansion and these pleasant bowers,
Walks, pools, and arbours, homestead, hall,—
Our fate is theirs, will reach them all;
The young horse must forsake his manger,
And learn to glory in a stranger;
The hawk forget his perch,—the hound
Be parted from his ancient ground:
The blast will sweep us all away,
One desolation, one decay!
And even this creature!'—which words saying
He pointed to a lovely doe,
A few steps distant, feeding, straying,
Fair creature, and more white than snow;
'Even she will to her peaceful woods
Return, and to her murmuring floods,
And be in heart and soul the same
She was before she hither came,—
Ere she had learn'd to love us all,
Herself beloved in Rylstone Hall.
But, thou, my sister, doom'd to be
The last leaf which by Heaven's decree
Must hang upon a blasted tree;
If not in vain we have breathed the breath
Together of a purer faith—
If hand in hand we have been led
And thou, (O happy thought this day!)
Not seldom foremost in the way—
If on one thought our minds have fed,
And we have in one meaning read—
If, when at home, our private weal
Hath suffer'd from the shock of zeal,
Together we have learn'd to prize
Forbearance and self-sacrifice—
If we like combatants have fared,

And for this issue been prepared —
If thou art beautiful, and youth
And thought endue thee with all truth,
Be strong — be worthy of the grace
Of God, and fill thy destined place ;
A soul, by force of sorrows high,
Uplifted to the purest sky
Of undisturb'd humanity !'

He ended, — or she heard no more :
He led her from the yew-tree shade,
And at the mansion's silent door,
He kiss'd the consecrated maid ;
And down the valley he pursued,
Alone, the armèd multitude.

CANTO THIRD.

Now joy for you and sudden cheer,
Ye watchmen upon Brancepeth Towers ;
Looking forth in doubt and fear,
Telling melancholy hours !
Proclaim it ! let your masters hear
That Norton with his band is near.
The watchmen from their station high
Pronounced the word, — and the earls descry,
Forthwith, the armèd company
Marching down the banks of Were.

Said fearless Norton to the pair
Gone forth to hail him on the plain —
'This meeting, noble lords, looks fair ;
I bring with me a goodly train ;
Their hearts are with you : — hill and dale
Have help'd us : Ure we cross'd and Swale,
And horse and harness follow'd — see
The best part of their yeomanry !

Stand forth, my sons ! — these eight are mine,
Whom to this service I commend ;
Which way soe'er our fate incline,
These will be faithful to the end ;
They are my all' — voice fail'd him here, —
'My all save one, a daughter dear !
Whom I have left, the mildest birth,
The meekest child on this bless'd earth.
I had, but these are by my side,
These eight, and this is a day of pride !
The time is ripe — with festive din,
Lo ! how the people are flocking in, —
Like hungry fowl to the feeder's hand
When snow lies heavy upon the land.'

The Norton fix'd, at this demand,
His eye upon Northumberland,
And said, 'The minds of men will own
No loyal rest while England's crown
Remains without an heir, the bait
Of strife and factions desperate ;
Who, paying deadly hate in kind
Through all things else, in this can find
A mutual hope, a common mind ;
And plot, and pant to overwhelm
All ancient honour in the realm.
Brave earls ! to whose heroic veins
Our noblest blood is given in trust,
To you a suffering state complains,
And ye must raise her from the dust.
With wishes of still bolder scope
On you we look, with dearest hope,
Even for our altars, — for the prize
In heaven, or life that never dies ;
For the old and holy church we mourn,
And must in joy to her return.
Behold !' — and from his son, whose stand
Was on his right — from that guardian hand,
He took the banner, and unfurl'd
The precious folds — 'Behold,' said he,

'The ransom of a sinful world;
Let this your preservation be,—
The wounds of hands and feet and side,
And the sacred cross on which Jesus died!
This bring I from an ancient hearth,
These records wrought in pledge of love
By hands of no ignoble birth,
A maid o'er whom the blessed Dove
Vouchsafed in gentleness to brood
While she the holy work pursued.'
'Uplift the standard!' was the cry
From all the list'ners that stood round;
'Plant it,—by this we live or die!'
The Norton ceased not for that sound,
But said, 'The prayer which ye have heard,
Much injured earls, by these preferr'd,
Is offer'd to the saints, the sigh
Of tens of thousands, secretly,'
'Uplift it!' cried once more the band,
And then a thoughtful pause ensued.
'Uplift it!' said Northumberland—
Whereat, from all the multitude,
Who saw the banner rear'd on high
In all its dread emblazonry,
With tumult and indignant rout
A voice of uttermost joy broke out:
The transport was roll'd down the river of Were,
And Durham, the time honour'd Durham, did hear,
And the towers of Saint Cuthbert were stirr'd by the shout!

Now was the North in arms: they shine
In warlike trim from Tweed to Tyne,
At Percy's voice: and Neville sees
His followers gathering in from Tees,
From Were, and all the little rills
Conceal'd among the forkèd hills.
Seven hundred knights, retainers all
Of Neville, at their master's call

Had sate together in Raby Hall;
Such strength that earldom held of yore;
Nor wanted at this time rich store
Of well-appointed chivalry.
Not loth the sleepy lance to wield,
And greet the old paternal shield,
They heard the summons; and, furthermore,
Came foot and horseman of each degree,
Unbound by pledge of fealty;
Appear'd with free and open hate
Of novelties in church and state;
Knight, burgher, yeoman, and esquire,
And the Romish priest, in priest's attire.
And thus, in arms, a zealous band
Proceeding under joint command,
To Durham first their course they bear,
And in St. Cuthbert's ancient seat
Sang mass,—and tore the book of prayer,—
And trod the Bible beneath their feet.

Thence marching southward, smooth and free,
'They muster'd their host at Wetherby,
Full sixteen thousand fair to see;'
The choicest warriors of the North:
But none for undisputed worth
Like those eight sons; who, in a ring,
Each with a lance, erect and tall,
A falchion, and a buckler small,
Stood by their sire on Clifford Moor,
In youthful beauty flourishing
To guard the standard which he bore.
With feet that firmly press'd the ground
They stood, and girt their father round;
Such was his choice,— no steed will he
Henceforth bestride; triumphantly
He stood upon the verdant sod,
Trusting himself to the earth, and God.
Rare sight to embolden and inspire!
Proud was the field of sons and sire,
Of him the most; and, sooth to say

No shape of man in all the array
So graced the sunshine of that day.
The monumental pomp of age
Was with this goodly personage;
A stature undepress'd in size,
Unbent, which rather seem'd to rise,
In open victory o'er the weight
Of seventy years, to higher height;
Magnific limbs of wither'd state,—
A face to fear and venerate,—
Eyes dark and strong—and on his head
Rich locks of silver hair thick spread,
Which a brown morion half conceal'd,
Light as a hunter's of the field;
And thus, with girdle round his waist,
Whereon the banner-staff might rest
At need, he stood, advancing high
The glittering, floating pageantry.

Who sees him! Many see, and one
With unparticipated gaze,
Who 'mong these thousands friend hath none,
And treads in solitary ways.
He, following wheresoe'er he might,
Hath watch'd the banner from afar,
As shepherds watch a lonely star,
Or mariners the distant light
That guides them on a stormy night.
And now, upon a chosen plot
Of rising ground, yon heathy spot
He takes this day his far-off stand,
With breast unmail'd, unweapon'd hand.
Bold is his aspect; but his eye
Is pregnant with anxiety,
While, like a tutelary power,
He there stands fix'd, from hour to hour.
Yet sometimes, in more humble guise,
Stretch'd out upon the ground he lies,—
As if it were his only task
Like herdsman in the sun to bask,

Or by his mantle's help to find
A shelter from the nipping wind:
And thus, with short oblivion blest,
His weary spirits gather rest.
Again he lifts his eyes, and lo!
The pageant glancing to and fro;
And hope is waken'd by the sight
That he thence may learn, ere fall of night,
Which way the tide is doom'd to flow.

To London were the chieftains bent;
But what avails the bold intent?
A royal army is gone forth
To quell the rising of the North;
They march with Dudley at their head,
And in seven days space, will to York be led!
Can such a mighty host be raised
Thus suddenly, and brought so near?
The earls upon each other gazed;
And Neville was oppress'd with fear;
For, though he bore a valiant name,
His heart was of a timid frame.
And bold if both had been, yet they
'Against so many may not stay;'
And therefore will retreat to seize
A stronghold on the banks of Tees;
There wait a favourable hour,
Until Lord Dacre with his power
From Naworth comes; and Howard's aid
Be with them — openly display'd.

While through the host, from man to man,
A rumour of this purpose ran,
The standard giving to the care
Of him who heretofore did bear
That charge, impatient Norton sought
The chieftains, to unfold his thought,
And thus abruptly spake, — 'We yield
(And can it be?) an unfought field!
How often hath the strength of Heaven

To few triumphantly been given !
Still do our very children boast
Of mitred Thurston — what a host
He conquer'd ! Saw we not the plain
(And flying shall behold again)
Where faith was proved, while to battle moved
The standard on the sacred wain,
On which the grey-hair'd barons stood,
And the infant heir of Mowbray's blood,
Beneath the saintly ensigns three,
Their confidence and victory ?
Shall Percy blush, then, for his name —
Must Westmorland be ask'd with shame
Whose were the numbers, where the loss,
In that other day of Neville's Cross ?
When, as the vision gave command;
The Prior of Durham with holy hand
Saint Cuthbert's relic did uprear
Upon the point of a lofty spear,
And God descended in his power,
While the monks pray'd in maiden's bower.
Less would not at our need be due
To us, who war against the untrue ;
The delegates of Heaven we rise,
Convoked the impious to chastise ;
We, we the sanctities of old
Would re-establish and uphold.'
The chiefs were by his zeal confounded,
But word was given, and the trumpet sounded;
Back through the melancholy host
Went Norton, and resumed his post.
'Alas !' thought he, 'and have I borne
This banner raised so joyfully,
This hope of all posterity,
Thus to become at once the scorn
Of babbling winds as they go by,
A spot of shame to the sun's bright eye,
To the frail clouds a mockery !'
'Even these poor eight of mine would stem' —
Half to himself, and half to them

He spake — 'would stem, or quell a force
Ten times their number, man and horse;
This by their own unaided might,
Without their father in their sight,
Without the cause for which they fight;
A cause, which on a needful day
Would breed us thousands brave as they.'
— So speaking, he upraised his head
Towards that imagery once more;
But the familiar prospect shed
Despondency unfelt before;
A shock of intimations vain,
Blank fear, and superstitious pain,
Fell on him, with the sudden thought
Of her by whom the work was wrought;
'O wherefore was her count'nance bright
With love divine and gentle light?
She did in passiveness obey,
But her faith lean'd another way.
Ill tears she wept, — I saw them fall,
I overheard her as she spake
Sad words to that mute animal,
The white doe, in the hawthorn brake;
She steep'd, but not for Jesu's sake,
This cross in tears: by her, and one
Unworthier far, we are undone —
Her brother was it, who assail'd
Her tender spirit, and prevail'd.
Her other parent, too, whose head
In the cold grave hath long be laid,
From reason's earliest dawn beguiled
The docile, unsuspecting child:
Far back — far back my mind must go
To reach the well-spring of this woe?'
While thus he brooded, music sweet
Was play'd to cheer them in retreat;
But Norton linger'd in the rear:
Thought follow'd thought — and ere the last
Of that unhappy train was pass'd,
Before him Francis did appear.

'Now, when 'tis not your aim t' oppose,'
Said he, 'in open field your foes;
Now that from this decisive day
Your multitude must melt away,
An unarm'd man may come, unblamed,
To ask a grace that was not claim'd
Long as your hopes were high; he now
May hither bring a fearless brow,
When his discountenance can do
No injury,—may come to you.
Though in your cause no part I bear,
Your indignation I can share;
Am grieved this backward march to see,
How careless and disorderly!
I scorn your chieftains—men who lead,
And yet want courage at their need;
Then look at them with open eyes!
Deserve they further sacrifice?
My father! I would help to find
A place of shelter, till the rage
Of cruel men do like the wind
Exhaust itself, and sink to rest;
Be brother now to brother join'd!
Admit me in the equipage
Of your misfortunes, that at least,
Whatever fate remains behind,
I may bear witness in my breast
To your nobility of mind!'

'Thou enemy—my bane and blight!
Oh, bold to fight the coward's fight
Against all good!—but why declare
At length, the issue of this prayer?
Or how, from his depression raised,
The father on his son had gazed;
Suffice it that the son gave way,
Nor strove that passion to allay,
Nor did he turn aside to prove
His brothers' wisdom, or their love;
But calmly from the spot withdrew,

The like endeavours to renew,
Should e'er a kindlier time ensue.

CANTO FOURTH.

FROM cloudless ether looking down,
The moon, this tranquil evening, sees
A camp, and a beleaguer'd town,
And castle like a stately crown
On the steep rocks of winding Tees;
And, southward far, with moors between,
Hill-tops, and floods, and forests green,
The bright moon sees that valley small
Where Rylstone's old sequester'd Hall
A venerable image yields
Of quiet to the neighbouring fields;
While from one pillar'd chimney breathes
The silver smoke, and mounts in wreaths.
The courts are hush'd; for timely sleep
The greyhounds to their kennel creep;
The peacock in the broad ash-tree
Aloft is roosted for the night,
He who in proud prosperity
Of colours manifold and bright,
Walk'd round, affronting the daylight;
And higher still, above the bower
Where he is perch'd, from yon lone tower
The hall-clock in the clear moonshine
With glittering finger points at nine.
Ah! who could think that sadness here
Had any sway — or pain — or fear?
A soft and lulling sound is heard
Of streams inaudible by day;
The garden pool's dark surface — stirr'd
By the night insects in their play —
Breaks into dimples small and bright;
A thousand, thousand rings of light

That shape themselves and disappear
Almost as soon as seen : and lo !
Not distant far, the milk-white doe ;
The same fair creature which was nigh,
Feeding in tranquillity,
When Francis utter'd to the maid
His last words in the yew-tree shade :
The same fair creature, who hath found
Her way into forbidden ground ;
Where now, within this spacious plot
For pleasure made, a goodly spot,
With lawns, and beds of flowers, and shades
Of trellis-work, in long arcades,
And cirque and crescent framed by wall
Of close-clipp'd foliage green and tall,
Converging walks, and fountains gay,
And terraces in trim array, —
Beneath yon cypress spiring high,
With pine and cedar spreading wide
Their darksome boughs on either side,
In open moonlight doth she lie ;
Happy as others of her kind,
That, far from human neighbourhood,
Range — unrestricted as the wind —
Through park, or chase, or savage wood.

But where at this still hour is she —
The consecrated Emily ?
Even while I speak, behold the maid
Emerging from the cedar shade
To open moonshine, where the doe
Beneath the cypress spire is laid,
Like a patch of April snow
Upon a bed of herbage green
Lingering, in a woody glade,
Or behind a rocky screen —
Lonely relic ! which, if seen
By the shepherd, is pass'd by
With an inattentive eye.
Nor more regard doth she bestow
Upon the uncomplaining doe !

Yet the meek creature was not free,
Erewhile, from some perplexity :
For thrice hath she approach'd, this day,
The thought-bewilder'd Emily ;
Endeavouring in her gentle way,
Some smile or look of love to gain —
Encouragement to sport or play ;
Attempts which by the unhappy maid
Have all been slighted or gainsaid.
O welcome to the viewless breeze !
'Tis fraught with acceptable feeling,
And instantaneous sympathies
Into the sufferer's bosom stealing.
Ere she hath reach'd yon rustic shed
Hung with late-flowering woodbine, spread
Along the walls and overhead,
The fragrance of the breathing flowers
Revives a memory of those hours
When here, in this remote alcove
While from the pendant woodbine came
(Like odours, sweet as if the same),
A fondly anxious mother strove
To teach her salutary fears
And mysteries above her years.
Yes, she is soothed : an image faint —
And yet not faint — a presence bright
Returns to her ; 'tis that bless'd saint
Who with mild looks and language mild
Instructed here her darling child,
While yet a prattler on the knee,
To worship in simplicity
The invisible God, and take for guide
The faith reform'd and purified.

'Tis flown — the vision ; and the sense
Of that beguiling influence !
' But oh ! thou angel from above
Thou spirit of maternal love,
That stood'st before my eyes, more clear
Than ghosts are fabled to appear,

Sent upon embassies of fear ;
As thou thy presence hast to me
Vouchsafed — in radiant ministry
Descend on Francis ! — through the air
Of this sad earth to him repair,
Speak to him with a voice, and say,
That he must cast despair away !'

Then from within the embower'd retreat
Where she had found a grateful seat,
Perturb'd she issues. She will go ;
Herself will follow to the war,
And clasp her father's knees ; ah, no !
She meets the insuperable bar,
The injunction by her brother laid ;
His parting charge — but ill obey'd !
That interdicted all debate,
All prayer for this cause or for that ;
All efforts that would turn aside
The headstrong current of their fate :
Her duty is to stand and wait ;
In resignation to abide
The shock, and finally secure
O'er pain and grief a triumph pure.
She knows, she feels it, and is cheer'd ;
At least her present pangs are check'd.
And now an ancient man appear'd,
Approaching her with grave respect.
Down the smooth walk which then she trod,
He paced along the silent sod,
And greeting her, thus gently spake :
'An old man's privilege I take ;
Dark is the time — a woeful day !
Dear daughter of affliction, say
How can I serve you ? — point the way.'

'Rights have you, and may well be bold :
You with my father have grown old
In friendship : go — from him — from me —
Strive to avert this misery !

This would I beg ; but on my mind
A passive stillness is enjoin'd.
If prudence offer help or aid,
On *you* is no restriction laid ;
You not forbidden to recline
With hope upon the will divine.'

'Hope,' said the sufferer's zealous friend,
'Must not forsake us till the end.
In Craven's wilds is many a den
To shelter persecuted men :
Far underground in many a cave
Where they might lie, as in the grave,
Until this storm had ceased to rave ;
Or let them cross the river Tweed,
And be at once from peril freed !'

'Ah, tempt me not !' she faintly sigh'd ;
'I will not counsel nor exhort,—
With my condition satisfied ;
But you, at least, may make report
Of what befalls : be this your task,
This may be done ; 'tis all I ask !'

She spake, and from the lady's sight
The sire, unconscious of his age,
Departed promptly as a page
Bound on some errand of delight.
'The noble Francis, wise as brave,'
Thought he, 'may have the skill to save :
With hopes in tenderness conceal'd,
Unarm'd he follow'd to the field.
Him will I seek : the insurgent powers
Are now besieging Barnard's towers,—
Grant that the moon which shines this night
May guide them in a prudent flight !'

But quick the turns of chance and change,
And knowledge has a narrow range ;
Whence idle fears, and needless pain,
And wishes blind, and efforts vain.

Their flight the fair moon may not see ;
For, from mid-heaven, already she
Hath witness'd their captivity.
She saw the desperate assault
Upon that hostile castle made;
But dark and dismal is the vault
Where Norton and his sons are laid !
Disastrous issue ! He had said,
'This night yon haughty towers must yield,
Or we for ever quit the field.
Neville is utterly dismay'd
For promise fails of Howard's aid ;
And Dacre to our call replies
That he is unprepared to rise.
My heart is sick ; this weary pause
Must needs be fatal to the cause.
The breach is open ; on the wall,
This night, the banner shall be planted !'
'Twas done. His sons were with him — all
They belt him round with hearts undaunted :
And others follow — sire and son
Leap down into the court — ''Tis won,'
They shout aloud ; but heaven decreed
Another close
To that brave deed
Which struck with terror friends and foes !
The friend shrinks back, the foe recoils
From Norton and his filial band ;
But they, now caught within the toils,
Against a thousand cannot stand ;
The foe from numbers courage drew,
And overpower'd that gallant few.
'A rescue for the standard !' cried
The father from within the walls ;
But see, the sacred standard falls !
Confusion through the camp spreads wide :
Some fled, and some their fears detain'd ;
But ere the moon had sunk to rest
In her pale chambers of the west,
Of that rash levy nought remain'd.

CANTO FIFTH.

HIGH on a point of rugged ground,
Among the wastes of Rylstone Fell,
Above the loftiest ridge or mound,
Where foresters or shepherds dwell,
An edifice of warlike frame
Stands single — Norton Tower its name ;
It fronts all quarters, and looks round
O'er path and road, and plain and dell,
Dark moor, and gleam of pool and stream,
Upon a prospect without bound.

The summit of this bold ascent,
Though bleak and bare, and as seldom free
As Pendle Hill or Pennygent
From wind, or frost, or vapours wet,
Had often heard the sound of glee
When there the youthful Nortons met
To practice games and archery :
How proud and happy they ! the crowd
Of lookers-on how pleased and proud !
And from the heat of the noontide sun,
From showers, or when the prize was won,
They to the watch-tower did repair,
Commodious pleasure-house ! and there
Would mirth run round, with generous fare ;
And the stern old lord of Rylstone Hall,
He was the proudest of them all !

But now, his child, with anguish pale,
Upon the height walks to and fro ;
'Tis well that she hath heard the tale, —
Received the bitterness of woe :
Dead are they, they were doom'd to die ;
The sons and father all are dead,
All dead save one : and Emily
No more shall seek this watch-tower high,
To look far north with anxious eye ;

She is relieved from hope and dread,
Though suffering in extremity.

For she had hoped—had hoped and fear'd—
Such rights did feeble nature claim;
And oft her steps had hither steer'd,
Though not unconscious of self-blame;
For she her brother's charge revered,
His farewell words; and by the same,
Yea, by her brother's very name,
Had, in her solitude, been cheer'd.

She turn'd to him, who, with his eye,
Was watching her while on the height
She sate, or wander'd restlessly,
O'erburden'd by her sorrow's weight—
To him who this dire news had told,
And now beside the mourner stood
(That grey-hair'd man of gentle blood,
Who with her father had grown old
In friendship, rival hunters they,
And fellow-warriors in their day)—
To Rylstone he the tidings brought;
Then on this place the maid had sought,
And told, as gently as could be,
The end of this sad tragedy,
Which it had been his lot to see.

To him the lady turn'd:—'You said
That Francis lives—*he* is not dead?'

'Your noble brother hath been spared;
To take his life they have not dared.
On him, and on his high endeavour,
The light of praise shall shine for ever!
Nor did he (such Heaven's will) in vain
His solitary course maintain;
Not vainly struggled—in the might
Of duty seeing with clear sight;
He was their comfort to the last,
Their joy till every pang was past.

'I witness'd when to York they came:
What, lady, if their feet were tied!
They might deserve a good man's blame;
But marks of infamy and shame,
These were their triumph, these their pride.
"Lo Francis comes!" the people cried,
"A prisoner once, but now set free!
'Tis well, for he the worst defied
For sake of natural piety;
He rose not in this quarrel, he
His father and his brothers woo'd,
Both for their own and country's good,
To rest in peace — he did divide,
He parted from them; but at their side
Now walks in unanimity —
Then peace to cruelty and scorn,
While to the prison they are borne,
Peace, peace to all indignity!"

'And so in prison were they laid —
Oh hear me, hear me, gentle maid!
For I am come with power to bless,
To scatter gleams through your distress
Of a redeeming happiness.
Me did a reverent pity move
And privilege of ancient love,
But most, compassion for your fate,
Lady! — for your forlorn estate;
Me did these move, and I made bold,
And entrance gain'd to that stronghold.

'Your father gave me cordial greeting;
But to his purposes, that burn'd
Within him, instantly return'd —
He was commanding and entreating,
And said, "We need not stop, my son!
But I will end what is begun;
'Tis matter which I do not fear
To intrust to any living ear."
And so to Francis he renew'd
His words, more calmly thus pursued: —

"Might this our enterprise have sped,
Change wide and deep the land had seen,
A renovation from the dead,
A spring-tide of immortal green:
The darksome altars would have blazed
Like stars when clouds are roll'd away;
Salvation to all eyes that gazed,
Once more the rood had been upraised
To spread its arms, and stand for aye.
Then, then, had I survived to see
New life in Bolton Priory;
The voice restored, the eye of truth
Re-open'd that inspired my youth;
Had seen her in her pomp array'd;
This banner (for such vow I made)
Should on the consecrated breast,
Of that same temple have found rest:
I would myself have hung it high,
Glad offering of glad victory!

"A shadow of such thought remains
To cheer this sad and pensive time;
A solemn fancy yet sustains
One feeble being — bids me climb
Even to the last — one effort more
To attest my faith, if not restore.

"Hear then," said he, "while I impart,
My son, the last wish of my heart.
The banner strive thou to regain;
And if th' endeavour be not vain,
Bear it — to whom if not to thee
Shall I this lonely thought consign? —
Bear it to Bolton Priory,
And lay it on Saint Mary's shrine,
To wither in the sun and breeze,
'Mid those decaying sanctities.
There let at least the gift be laid,
The testimony there display'd;
Bold proof that with no selfish aim,

But for lost faith and Christ's dear name,
I helmeted a brow though white,
And took a place in all men's sight;
Yea, offer'd up this beauteous brood,
This fair unrivall'd brotherhood,
And turn'd away from thee, my son!
And left — but be the rest unsaid,
The name untouch'd, the tear unshed, —
My wish is known and I have done:
Now promise, grant this one request —
This dying prayer — and be thou blest!"

'Then Francis answer'd fervently,
"If God so will, the same shall be."

'Immediately this solemn word
Thus scarcely given, a noise was heard,
And officers appear'd in state
To lead the prisoners to their fate.
They rose, oh! wherefore should I fear
To tell, or, lady, you to hear?
They rose — embraces none were given —
They stood like trees when earth and heaven
Are calm; they knew each other's worth,
And reverently the band went forth.
They met, when they had reach'd the door,
The banner — which a soldier bore —
One marshall'd thus with base intent
That he in scorn might go before,
And, holding up this monument,
Conduct them to their punishment;
So cruel Sussex, unrestrain'd
By human feeling, had ordain'd.
The unhappy banner Francis saw,
And, with a look of calm command
Inspiring universal awe,
He took it from the soldier's hand;
And all the people that were round
Confirm'd the deed in peace profound.
— High transport did the father shed

Upon his son — and they were led,
Led on, and yielded up their breath,
Together died a happy death !
But Francis, soon as he had braved
This insult, and the banner saved,
That moment, from among the tide
Of the spectators, occupied
In admiration or dismay,
Bore unobserved his charge away.'

These things, which thus had in the sight
And hearing pass'd of him who stood
With Emily, on the watch-tower height,
In Rylstone's woeful neighbourhood,
He told ; and oftentimes with voice
Of power to encourage or rejoice ;
For deepest sorrows that aspire,
Go high, no transport ever higher.
'Yet, yet in this affliction,' said
The old man to the silent maid,
'Yet lady ! Heaven is good — the night
Shows yet a star which is most bright ;
Your brother lives — he lives — is come,
Perhaps, already to his home ;
Then let us leave this dreary place.'
She yielded, and with gentle pace,
Though without one uplifted look,
To Rylstone Hall her way she took.

CANTO SIXTH.

WHY comes not Francis ? Joyful cheer
In that parental gratulation,
And glow of righteous indignation,
Went with him from the doleful city.
He fled — yet in his flight could hear
The death-sound of the minster bell ;

That sullen stroke pronounced farewell
To Marmaduke, cut off from pity !
To Ambrose that ! and then a knell
For him, the sweet half-open'd flower !
For all — all dying in one hour !
Why comes not Francis ? Thoughts of love
Should bear him to his sister dear
With motion fleet as winged dove ;
Yea, like a heavenly messenger,
An angel-guest, should he appear.
Why comes he not ? — for westward fast
Along the plain of York he pass'd ;
The banner staff was in his hand,
The imagery conceal'd from sight,
And cross th' expanse, in open flight ;
Reckless of what impels or leads,
Uncheck'd he hurries on ; nor heeds
The sorrow of the villagers ;
From the triumphant cruelties
Of vengeful military force,
And punishment without remorse,
Uncheck'd he journeys — under law
Of inward occupation strong ;
And the first object which he saw,
With conscious sight, as he swept along,
It was the banner in his hand ! —
He felt and made a sudden stand.

He look'd about like one betray'd :
What hath he done — what promise made ?
Oh weak, weak moment — to what end
Can such a vain oblation tend,
And he the bearer ? Can he go
Carrying this instrument of woe,
And find — find anywhere, a right
To excuse him in his country's sight ?
No ! will not all men deem the change
A downward course, perverse and strange ?
Here is it, — but how — when — must she,
The unoffending Emily,
Again this piteous object see ?

Such conflict long did he maintain
Within himself, and found no rest ;
Calm liberty he could not gain ;
And yet the service was unblest.
His own life into danger brought
By this sad burden — even that thought
Raised self-suspicion which was strong,
Swaying the brave man to his wrong :
And how, unless it were the sense
Of all-disposing Providence,
Its will intelligibly shown,
Finds he the banner in his hand,
Without a thought to such intent,
Or conscious effort of his own —
And no obstruction to prevent
His father's wish and last command?
And, thus beset, he heaved a sigh,
Remembering his own prophecy
Of utter desolation, made
To Emily in the yew-tree shade :
He sigh'd, submitting to the power,
The might of that prophetic hour.
'No choice is left; the deed is mine —
Dead are they, dead ! -- and I will go,
And, for their sakes, come weal or woe,
Will lay the relic on the shrine.'

So forward with a steady will
He went, and traversed plain and hill ;
And up the vale of Wharf his way
Pursued ; and, on the second day,
He reach'd a summit whence his eyes
Could see the Tower of Bolton rise.
There Francis for a moment's space
Made halt — but hark ! a noise behind
Of horsemen at an eager pace,
He heard, and with misgiving mind.
'Tis Sir George Bowes who leads the band :
They come, by cruel Sussex sent ;
Who, when the Nortons from the hand

Of death had drunk their punishment,
Bethought him, angry and ashamed,
How Francis had the banner claim'd,
And with that charge had disappear'd ;
By all the standers-by revered.
His whole bold carriage (which had quell'd
Thus far the opposer, and repell'd
All censure,— enterprise so bright
That even bad men had vainly striven
Against that overcoming light)
Was then review'd, and prompt word given,
That to what place soever fled,
He should be seized, alive or dead.

The troop of horse have gain'd the height
Where Francis stood in open sight.
They hem him round — 'Behold the proof!
Behold the ensign in his hand !
He did not arm, he walk'd aloof ;
For why ? — to save his father's land ;
Worst traitor of them all is he,
A traitor dark and cowardly !'

'I am no traitor !' Francis said,
'Though this unhappy freight I bear :
It weakens me, my heart hath bled
Till it is weak — but you beware,
Nor do a suffering spirit wrong,
Whose self-reproaches are too strong !'
At this, he from the beaten road
Retreated, towards a brake of thorn,
Which like a place of vantage show'd ;
And there stood bravely, though forlorn.
In self-defence, with a warrior's brow,
He stood, nor weaponless was now ;
He from a soldier's hand had snatch'd
A spear, and with his eyes he watch'd
Their motions, turning round and round :
His weaker hand the banner held ;
And straight, by savage zeal impell'd,

Forth rush'd a pikeman, as if he,
Not without harsh indignity,
Would seize the same; instinctively,
To smite the offender, with his lance
Did Francis from the brake advance;
But, from behind, a treacherous wound
Unfeeling, brought him to the ground,—
A mortal stroke:—oh, grief to tell!
Thus, thus the noble Francis fell:
There did he lie, of breath forsaken;
The banner from his grasp was taken,
And borne exultingly away;
And the body was left on the ground where it lay.

Two days, as many nights, he slept
Alone, unnoticed, and unwept;
For at that time distress and fear
Possess'd the country far and near;
The third day, one who chanced to pass
Beheld him stretch'd upon the grass.
A gentle forester was he,
And of the Norton tenantry;
And he hath heard that by a train
Of horsemen Francis had been slain.
Much was he troubled—for the man
Hath recognised his pallid face;
And to the nearest huts he ran,
And call'd the people to the place.
'How desolate is Rylstone Hall;'
Such was the instant thought of all;
And if the lonely lady there
Should be, this sight she cannot bear!
Such thought the forester express'd,
And all were sway'd, and deem'd it best
That, if the priest should yield assent
And join himself to their intent,
Then, they, for Christian pity's sake,
In holy ground a grave would make;
That straightway buried he should be
In the churchyard of the Priory.

Apart, some little space, was made
The grave where Francis must be laid.
In no confusion or neglect
This did they, but in pure respect
That he was born of gentle blood,
And that there was no neighbourhood
Of kindred for him in that ground :
So to the churchyard they are bound,
Bearing the body on a bier
In decency and humble cheer ;
And psalms are sung with holy sound.

But Emily had raised her head,
And is again disquieted ;
She must behold ! — so many gone,
Where is the solitary one ?
And forth from Rylstone Hall stepp'd she, —
To seek her brother forth she went
And trembling her course she bent
Tow'rds Bolton's ruin'd Priory,
She comes, and in the vale hath heard
The funeral dirge — she sees the knot
Of people — sees them in one spot —
And darting like a wounded bird,
She reach'd the grave, and with her breast
Upon the ground, received the rest, —
The consummation, the whole ruth
And sorrow of this final truth !

CANTO SEVENTH.

THOU spirit ! whose angelic hand
Was to the harp a strong command.
Call'd the submissive strings to wake
In glory for this maiden's sake,
Say, spirit ! whither hath she fled
To hide her poor afflicted head ?

What mighty forest in its gloom
Enfolds her? — Is a rifted tomb
Within the wilderness her seat?
Some island which the wild waves beat,
Is that the sufferer's last retreat?
Or some aspiring rock that shrouds
Its perilous front in mists and clouds?
High climbing rock — deep sunless dale —
Sea — desert — what do these avail?
Oh take her anguish and her fears
Into a calm recess of years!

'Tis done; despoil and desolation
O'er Rylstone's fair domain have blown;
The walks and pools neglect hath sown
With weeds, the bowers are overthrown,
Or have given way to slow mutation,
While, in their ancient habitation
The Norton name hath been unknown:
The lordly mansion of its pride
Is stripp'd; the ravage hath spread wide
Through park and field, a perishing
That mocks the gladness of the spring!
And, with this silent gloom agreeing,
There is a joyless human being,
Of aspect such as if the waste
Were under her dominion placed:
Upon a primrose bank, her throne
Of quietness, she sits alone;
There seated, may this maid be seen,
Among the ruins of a wood,
Erewhile a covert bright and green,
And where full many a brave tree stood,
That used to spread its boughs, and ring
With the sweet bird's carolling.
Behold her, like a virgin queen,
Neglecting in imperial state
These outward images of fate,
And carrying inward a serene
And perfect sway, through many a thought

Of chance and change that hath been brought
To the subjection of a holy,
Though stern and rigorous, melancholy !
The like authority, with grace
Of awfulness, is in her face, —
There hath she fix'd it ; yet it seems
To o'ershadow by no native right
That face, which cannot lose the gleams —
Lose utterly — the tender gleams
Of gentleness, and meek delight,
And loving-kindness ever bright.
Such is her sovereign mien ; her dress
(A vest, with woollen cincture tied,
A hood of mountain wool undyed)
Is homely — fashion'd to express
A wandering pilgrim's humbleness.

And she *hath* wander'd, long and far,
Beneath the light of sun and star ;
Hath roam'd in trouble and in grief,
Driven forward like a wither'd leaf,
Yea like a ship at random blown
To distant places and unknown.
But now she dares to seek a haven
Among her native wilds of Craven ;
Hath seen again her father's roof,
And put her fortitude to proof.
The mighty sorrow has been borne,
And she is thoroughly forlorn :
Her soul doth in itself stand fast,
Sustain'd by memory of the past
And strength of reason ; held above
The infirmities of mortal love ;
Undaunted, lofty, calm, and stable,
And awfully impenetrable.

And so — beneath a moulder'd tree,
A self-surviving leafless oak,
By unregarded age from stroke
Of ravage saved — sate Emily.

There did she rest, with head reclined,
Herself most like a stately flower,
(Such have I seen) whom chance of birth
Hath separated from its kind,
To live and die in a shady bower,
Single on the gladsome earth.

When, with a noise like distant thunder,
A troop of deer came sweeping by,
And, suddenly, behold a wonder!
For, of that band of rushing deer,
A single one in mid career
Hath stopp'd, and fix'd its large full eye
Upon the Lady Emily.
A doe most beautiful, clear white,
A radiant creature, silver bright!

Thus check'd, a little while it stay'd;
A little thoughtful pause it made!
And then advanced with stealth-like pace,
Drew softly near her — and more near,
Stopp'd once again: but as no trace
Was found of anything to fear,
Even to her feet the creature came,
And laid its head upon her knee,
And look'd into the lady's face,
A look of pure benignity,
And fond unclouded memory.
'It is,' thought Emily, 'the same,
The very doe of other years!'
The pleading look the lady view'd,
And by her gushing thoughts subdued
She melted into tears —
A flood of tears, that flow'd apace
Upon the happy creature's face.

O moment ever blest! O pair
Beloved of Heaven, Heaven's choicest care!
This was for you a precious greeting,
For both a bounteous, fruitful meeting.

Join'd are they, and the sylvan doe —
Can she depart — can she forego
The lady, once her playful peer,
And now her sainted mistress dear ?
And will not Emily receive
This lovely chronicler of things
Long past, delights and sorrowings ?
Lone sufferer ! will not she believe
The promise in that speaking face,
And take this gift of Heaven with grace ?

That day, the first of a reunion
Which was to teem with high communion,
That day of balmy April weather,
They tarried in the wood together ;
And when, ere fall of evening dew
She from this sylvan haunt withdrew,
The white doe track'd with faithful pace
The lady to her dwelling-place ;
That nook where, on paternal ground,
A habitation she had found,
The master of whose humble board
Once own'd her father for his lord ;
A hut, by tufted trees defended,
Where Rylstone Brook with Wharf is blended.

When Emily by morning light
Went forth, the doe was there in sight.
She shrunk : with one frail shock of pain,
Received and follow'd by a prayer,
Did she behold — saw once again ;
Shun will she not, she feels, will bear ;
But wheresoever she look'd round
All now was trouble-haunted ground.
So doth the sufferer deem it good
Even once again this neighbourhood
To leave. Unwoo'd, yet unforbidden,
The white doe follow'd up the vale,
Up to another cottage — hidden
In the deep fork of Amerdale :

And there may Emily restore
Herself, in spots unseen before.
Why tell of mossy rock, or tree,
By lurking Dernbrook's pathless side,
Haunts of a strengthening amity
That calm'd her, cheer'd, and fortified ?
For she hath ventured now to read
Of time, and place, and thought, and deed,
Endless history that lies
In her silent follower's eyes !
Who with a power like human reason,
Discerns the favourable season,
Skill'd to approach or to retire,
From looks conceiving her desire,
From look, deportment, voice, or mien
That vary to the heart within.
If she too passionately writhed
Her arms, or over deeply breathed,
Walk'd quick or slowly, every mood
In its degree was understood ;
Then well may their accord be true,
And kindly intercourse ensue.
Oh ! surely 'twas a gentle rousing
When she by sudden glimpse espied
The white doe on the mountain browsing,
Or in the meadow wander'd wide ?
How pleased, when down the straggler sank
Beside her, on some sunny bank !
How soothed, when in thick bower inclosed,
They like a nested pair reposed !
Fair vision ! when it cross'd the maid
Within some rocky cavern laid,
The dark cave's portal gliding by,
White as the whitest cloud on high,
Floating through the azure sky.
What now is left for pain or fear ?
That presence, dearer and more dear,
Did now a very gladness yield
At morning to the dewy field,
While they side by side were straying,

And the shepherd's pipe was playing;
And with a deeper peace endued
The hour of moonlight solitude.

With her companion, in such frame
Of mind, to Rylstone back she came;
And, wandering through the wasted groves,
Received the memory of old loves,
Undisturb'd and undistress'd,
Into a soul which now was blest
With a soft spring-day of holy,
Mild, delicious melancholy:
Not sunless gloom, or unenlighten'd,
But by tender fancies brighten'd.

When the bells of Rylstone play'd
Their sabbath music — 'God us ayde!'
That was the sound they seem'd to speak
Inscriptive legend, which I ween
May on those holy bells be seen,
That legend and her grandsire's name:
And oftentimes the lady meek
Had in her childhood read the same,
Words which she slighted at that day!
But now, when such sad change was wrought,
And of that lonely name she thought,
The bells of Rylstone seem'd to say,
While she sat listening in the shade,
With vocal music, 'God us ayde!'
And all the hills were glad to bear
Their part in this effectual prayer.

Nor lack'd she reason's firmest power;
But with the white doe at her side
Up doth she climb to Norton Tower,
And thence looks round her far and wide.
Her fate there measures, — all is still'd, —
The feeble hath subdued her heart;
Behold the prophecy fulfill'd,
Fulfill'd, and she sustains her part!

But here her brother's words have fail'd,—
Here hath a milder doom prevail'd;
That she, of him and all bereft,
Hath yet this faithful partner left,—
This single creature that disproves
His words, remains for her, and loves.
If tears are shed, they do not fall
For loss of him, for one, or all;
Yet, sometimes—sometimes doth she weep—
Moved gently in her soul's soft sleep;
A few tears down her cheek descend
For this her last and living friend.

Bless, tender hearts, their mutual lot,
And bless for both this savage spot!
Which Emily doth sacred hold,
For reasons dear and manifold;—
Here hath she, here before her sight,
Close to the summit of this height,
The grassy rock-encircled pound
In which the creature first was found.
So beautiful the spotless thrall
(A lovely youngling white as foam),
That it was brought to Rylstone Hall;
Her youngest brother led it home,
The youngest, then a lusty boy,
Brought home the prize—and with what joy!

But most to Bolton's sacred pile,
On favouring nights she loved to go:
There ranged through cloister, court, and aisle,
Attended by the soft-paced doe;
Nor did she fear in the still moonshine
To look upon Saint Mary's shrine;
Nor on the lonely turf that show'd
Where Francis slept in his last abode.
For that she came; there oft and long
She sat in meditation strong:
And, when she from the abyss return'd
Of thought, she neither shrunk nor mourn'd;

Was happy that she lived to greet
Her mute companion as it lay
In love and pity at her feet;
How happy in her turn to meet
That recognition! the mild glance
Beam'd from that gracious countenance;
Communication, like the ray
Of a new morning, to the nature
And prospects of the inferior creature!

A mortal song we frame, by dower
Encouraged of celestial power;
Power which the viewless spirit shed
By whom we were first visited;
Whose voice we heard, whose hand and wings
Swept like a breeze the conscious strings,
When, left in solitude, erewhile
We stood before this ruin'd pile,
And quitting unsubstantial dreams,
Sang in this presence kindred themes;
Distress and desolation spread
Through human hearts, and pleasure dead,—
Dead — but to live again on earth,
A second and yet nobler birth;
Dire overthrow, and yet how high
The re-ascent in sanctity!
From fair to fairer; day by day
A more divine and loftier way!
Even such this blessed pilgrim trod,
By sorrow lifted tow'rds her God;
Uplifted to the purest sky
Of undisturb'd mortality.
Her own thoughts loved she, and could bend
A dear look to her lowly friend;—
There stopp'd; her thirst was satisfied
With what this innocent spring supplied—
Her sanction inwardly she bore,
And stood apart from human cares:
But to the world return'd no more,
Although with no unwilling mind

Help did she give at need, and join'd
The Wharfdale peasants in their prayers.
At length, thus faintly, faintly tied
To earth, she was set free, and died.
Thy soul, exalted Emily,
Maid of the blasted family,
Rose to the God from whom it came!
In Rylstone church her mortal frame
Was buried by her mother's side.

Most glorious sunset! — and a ray
Survives — the twilight of this day;
In that fair creature whom the fields
Support, and whom the forest shields;
Who, having fill'd a holy place,
Partakes, in her degree, Heaven's grace;
And bears a memory and a mind
Raised far above the law of kind;
Haunting the spots with lonely cheer
Which her dear mistress once held dear;
Loves most what Emily loved most —
The inclosure of this churchyard ground;
Here wanders like a gliding ghost,
And every Sabbath here is found:
Comes with the people when the bells
Are heard among the moorland dells,
Finds entrance through yon arch, where way
Lies open on the sabbath day;
Here walks amid the mournful waste
Of prostrate altars, shrines defaced,
And floors encumber'd with rich show
Of fretwork imagery laid low;
Paces softly, or makes halt,
By fractured cell, or tomb, or vault,
By plate of monumental brass
Dim gleaming among weeds and grass,
And sculptured forms of warriors brave;
But chiefly by that single grave,
That one sequester'd hillock green,
The pensive visitant is seen.

There doth the gentle creature lie
With those adversities unmoved ;
Calm spectacle, by earth and sky
In their benignity approved !
And aye, methinks, this hoary pile,
Subdued by outrage and decay,
Looks down upon her with a smile,
A gracious smile, that seems to say,
'Thou, thou art not a child of Time,
But daughter of the Eternal Prime !'

THE BROTHERS.

THE BROTHERS.*

'THESE tourists, heaven preserve us! needs must live
A profitable life: some glance along,
Rapid and gay, as if the earth were air,
And they were butterflies to wheel about
Long as the summer lasted: some, as wise,
Upon the forehead of a jutting crag
Sit perch'd, with book and pencil on their knee,
And look and scribble, scribble on and look,
Until a man might travel twelve stout miles,
Or reap an acre of his neighbour's corn.
But, for that moping son of idleness —
Why can he tarry *yonder?* — In our churchyard
Is neither epitaph nor monument,
Tombstone nor name — only the turf we tread
And a few natural graves.' To Jane, his wife,
Thus spake the homely priest of Ennerdale.
It was a July evening; and he sate
Upon the long stone seat beneath the eaves
Of his old cottage, — as it chanced that day,
Employed in winter's work. Upon the stone
His wife sat near him, teasing matted wool,
While, from the twin cards, tooth'd with glittering wire,
He fed the spindle of his youngest child,
Who turn'd her large round wheel in the open air
With back and forward steps. Towards the field
In which the parish chapel stood alone,
Girt round with a bare ring of mossy wall,
While half an hour went by, the Priest had sent

* This poem was intended to conclude a series of pastorals, the scene of which was laid among the mountains of Cumberland and Westmorland. I mention this to apologise for the abruptness with which the poem begins.

THE BROTHERS *

'THESE tourists, heaven preserve us! [illegible]
A profitable life: some glance along
Rapid and gay, as if the earth were [illegible]
And they were butterflies to wise [illegible]
Long as the summer lasted: some, [illegible]
Upon the forehead of a jutting crag
Sit perch'd, with book and pencil [illegible]
And look and scribble, scribble [illegible]
Until a man might travel twelve stout miles
Or reap an acre of his neighbour's corn
But, for that moping son of idleness,—
Why can he tarry *yonder*?—in our church-yard
Is neither epitaph nor monument,
Tombstone nor name—only the [illegible]
And a few natural graves. To [illegible]
Thus spake the homely priest of Ennerdale.
It was a July evening, and he [illegible]
Upon the long s[illegible] beneath the [illegible]
Of his old cott[illegible] it chanced that [illegible]
Employed in w[illegible] Upon the [illegible]
His wife sat [illegible]
While, from [illegible] him:
He fed the s[illegible]
Who turn'd [illegible]
With back [illegible]
In which t[illegible]
Girt roun[illegible] rocks,
While h[illegible] hanged.

* T[illegible] field had come
the s[illegible] yard gate,
las[illegible] leisure, limb by limb,
[illegible] racency.

Many a long look of wonder; and at last,
Risen from his seat, beside the snow-white ridge
Of carded wool which the old man had piled,
He laid his implements with gentle care,
Each in the other lock'd; and, down the path
Which from his cottage to the churchyard led,
He took his way, impatient to accost
The stranger, whom he saw still lingering there.

'Twas one well known to him in former days,
A shepherd-lad; — who ere his sixteenth year,
Had left that calling, tempted to intrust
His expectations to the fickle winds
And perilous waters, — with the mariners
A fellow-mariner, — and so had fared
Through twenty seasons; but he had been rear'd
Among the mountains, and he in his heart
Was half a shepherd on the stormy seas.
Oft in the piping shrouds had Leonard heard
The tones of waterfalls, and inland sounds
Of caves and trees: — and when the regular wind
Between the tropics fill'd the steady sail,
And blew with the same breath through days and weeks,
Lengthening invisibly its weary line
Along the cloudless main, he in those hours
Of tiresome indolence, would often hang
Over the vessel's side, and gaze and gaze;
And, while the broad green wave and sparkling foam
Flash'd round him images and hues that wrought
In union with the employment of his heart,
He, thus by feverish passion overcome,
Even with the organs of his bodily eye,
Below him in the bosom of the deep,
Saw mountains, — saw the forms of sheep that grazed
On verdant hills — with dwellings among trees,
And shepherds clad in the same country grey
Which he himself had worn.*

* This description of the Calenture is sketched from an imperfect recollection of an admirable one in prose, by Mr. Gilbert, author of 'The Hurricane.'

And now at last
From perils manifold, with some small wealth,
Acquired by traffic in the Indian isles,
To his parental home he is return'd,
With a determined purpose to resume
The life which he lived there ; both for the sake
Of many darling pleasures, and the love
Which to an only brother he has borne
In all his hardships, since that time
When, whether it blew foul or fair, they two
Were brother shepherds on their native hills.
— They were the last of all their race : and now,
When Leonard had approach'd his home, his heart
Fail'd in him ; and, not venturing to inquire
Tidings of one whom he so dearly loved,
Towards the churchyard he had turn'd aside, —
That as he knew in what particular spot
His family were laid, he thence might learn
If still his brother lived, or to the file
Another grave was added. He had found
Another grave, — near which a full half-hour
He had remain'd : but, as he gazed, there grew
Such a confusion in his memory,
That he began to doubt ; and he had hopes
That he had seen this heap of turf before, —
That it was not another grave ; but one
He had forgotten. He had lost his path,
As up the vale, that afternoon, he walk'd
Through fields which once had been well known to him :
And oh ! what joy, the recollection now
Sent to his heart ! he lifted up his eyes,
And looking round, imagined that he saw
Strange alteration wrought on every side
Among the woods and fields, and that the rocks,
And the eternal hills themselves were changed.

By this the Priest, who down the field had come
Unseen by Leonard, at the churchyard gate,
Stopp'd short, — and thence, at leisure, limb by limb,
Perused him with a gay complacency.

Ay, thought the Vicar, smiling to himself,
'Tis one of those who needs must leave the path
Of the world's business to go wild alone:
His arms have a perpetual holiday;
The happy man will creep about the fields,
Following his fancies by the hour, to bring
Tears down his cheeks, or solitary smiles
Into his face, until the setting sun
Write fool upon his forehead. Planted thus
Beneath a shed that over-arch'd the gate
Of this rude churchyard, till the stars appear'd,
The good man might have communed within himself,
But that the Stranger, who had left the grave,
Approach'd; he recognised the Priest at once,
And, after greetings interchanged, and given
By Leonard to the Vicar, as to one
Unknown to him, this dialogue ensued.

LEONARD.

You live sir, in these dales, a quiet life:
Your years make up one peaceful family;
And who would grieve and fret, if welcome come
And welcome gone, they are so like each other,
They cannot be remember'd? Scarce a funeral
Comes to this churchyard once in eighteen months;
And yet some changes must take place among you:
And you who dwell here, even among these rocks
Can trace the finger of mortality,
And see, that with our threescore years and ten,
We are not all that perish. —— I remember,
For many years ago I pass'd this road,
There was a footway all along the fields
By the brook-side — 'tis gone — and that dark cleft!
To me it does not seem to wear the face
Which then it had.

PRIEST.

Nay, sir, for ought I know,
That chasm is much the same —

LEONARD.

But, surely, yonder —

PRIEST.

Ay, there, indeed, your memory is a friend
That does not play you false. — On that tall pike
(It is the loneliest place of all these hills)
There were two springs which bubbled side by side,
As if they had been made that they might be
Companions for each other : ten years back,
Close to those brother fountains, the huge crag
Was rent with lightning, — one is dead and gone,
The other, left behind, is flowing still.* ——
For accidents and changes such as these,
We want not store of them ! — a waterspout
Will bring down half a monntain ; what a feast
For folks that wander up and down like you
To see an acre's breadth of that wide cliff
One roaring cataract : — a sharp May storm,
Will come with loads of January snow,
And in one night send twenty score of sheep
To feed the ravens ; or a shepherd dies
By some untoward death among the rocks :
The ice breaks up and sweeps away a bridge —
A wood is fell'd : — and then for our own homes !
A child is born or christen'd, a field plough'd,
A daughter sent to service, a web spun,
The old house clock is deck'd with a new face ;
And hence, so far from wanting facts or dates
To chronicle the time, we all have here
A pair of diaries, — one serving, sir,
For the whole dale, and one for each fireside —
Yours was a stranger's judgment : for historians,
Commend me to those valleys !

* This actually took place upon Kidstow Pike at the head of Hawes Water.

LEONARD.

Yet your churchyard
Seems, if such freedom may be used with you,
To say that you are heedless of the past;
An orphan could not find his mother's grave:
Here's neither head nor foot stone, plate of brass,
Cross-bones or scull, — type of earthly state
Or emblem of our hopes: the dead man's home
Is but a fellow to that pasture field.

PRIEST.

Why, there, sir, is a thought that's new to me!
The stone-cutters, 'tis true, might beg their bread
If every English churchyard were like ours;
Yet your conclusion wanders from the truth:
We have no need of names and epitaphs;
We talk about the dead by our firesides.
And then, for our immortal part; *we* want
No symbols, sir, to tell us that plain tale:
The thought of death sits easy on the man
Who has been born and dies among the mountains.

LEONARD.

Your dalesmen, then, do in each other's thoughts
Possess a kind of second life: no doubt
You, sir, could help me to the history
Of half these graves?

PRIEST.

For eight-score winters past,
With what I've witness'd, and with what I've heard,
Perhaps I might; and, on a winter's evening,
If you were seated at my chimney's nook,
By turning o'er these hillocks one by one,
We two could travel, sir, through a strange round;
Yet all in the broad highway of the world.

Now there's a grave — your foot is half upon it, —
It looks just like the rest ; and yet that man
Died broken-hearted.

LEONARD.

'Tis a common case.
We'll take another : who is he that lies
Beneath yon ridge, the last of those three graves ?
It touches on that piece of native rock
Left in the churchyard wall.

PRIEST.

That's Walter Ewbank.
He had as white a head and fresh a cheek
As ever were produced by youth and age
Engendering in the blood of hale fourscore.
Through five long generations had the heart
Of Walter's forefathers o'erflowed the bounds
Of their inheritance, that single cottage —
You see it yonder ; and those few green fields.
They toil'd and wrought, and still from sire to son,
Each struggled, and each yielded as before
A little — yet a little — and old Walter,
They left to him the family heart and land
With other burthens than the crop it bore.
Year after year the old man still kept up
A cheerful mind, — and buffeted with bond,
Interest, and mortgages ; at last he sank,
And went into his grave before his time.
Poor Walter ! whether it was care that spurr'd him,
God only knows, but to the very last
He had the lightest foot in Ennerdale :
His pace was never that of an old man :
I almost see him tripping down the path
With his two grandsons after him : — but you,
Unless our landlord be your host to-night,
Have far to travel, — and on these rough paths
Even in the longest day of midsummer —

LEONARD.

But those two orphans

PRIEST.

Orphans! — Such they were —
Yet not while Walter lived: — for, though their parents
Lay burried side by side as now they lie,
The old man was a father to the boys,
Two fathers in one father: and if tears,
Shed when he talk'd of them where they were not,
And hauntings from the infirmity of love,
Are ought of what makes up a mother's heart,
This old man, in the day of his old age,
Was half a mother to them. — If you weep, sir,
To hear a stranger talking about strangers,
Heaven bless you when you are among your kindred!
Ay — You may turn that way — it is a grave
Which will bear looking at.

LEONARD.

These boys — I hope
They loved this good old man? —

PRIEST.

They did — and truly:
But that was what we almost overlook'd,
They were such darlings of each other. For
Though from their cradles they had lived with Walter,
The only kinsman near them, and though he
Inclined to them by reason of his age,
With a more fond, familiar tenderness,
They, notwithstanding, had much love to spare,
And it all went into each other's hearts.
Leonard, the elder by just eighteen months,
Was two years taller: 'twas a joy to see,
To hear, to meet them! — From their house the school

Was distant three short miles — and in the time
Of storm and thaw, when every watercourse
And unbridged stream, such as you may have noticed
Crossing our roads at every hundred steps,
Was swoln into a noisy rivulet,
Would Leonard then, when elder boys perhaps
Remain'd at home, go staggering through the fords,
Bearing his brother on his back. I have seen him,
On windy days, in one of those stray brooks,
Ay, more than once I've seen him mid-leg deep,
Their two books lying both on a dry stone
Upon the hither side : and once I said,
As I remember, looking round these rocks
And hills on which all of us were born,
That God who made the great book of the world
Would bless such piety —

LEONARD.

It may be then —

PRIEST.

Never did worthier lads break English bread ;
The finest Sunday that the autumn saw,
With all its mealy clusters of ripe nuts,
Could never keep these boys away from church,
Or tempt them to an hour of Sabbath breach.
Leonard and James ! I warrant, every corner
Among these rocks, and every hollow place
Where foot could come, to one or both of them
Was known as well as to the flowers that grow there.
Like roebucks they went bounding o'er the hills :
They play'd like two young ravens on the crags :
Then they could write, ay and speak too, as well
As many of their betters — and for Leonard !
The very night before he went away,
In my own house I put into his hand
A Bible, and I'd wager twenty pounds,
That, if he is alive, he has it yet.

LEONARD.

I seems, these brothers have not lived to be
A comfort to each other. —

PRIEST.

That they might
Live to such end, is what both old and young,
In this our valley, all of us have wish'd,
And what, for my part, I have often pray'd :
But Leonard —

LEONARD.

Then James still is left among you ?

PRIEST.

'Tis of the elder brother I am speaking :
They had an uncle ; — he was at that time
A thriving man, and traffick'd on the seas :
And, but for that same uncle, to this hour
Leonard had never handled rope or shroud.
For the boy loved the life which we lead here ;
And, though of unripe years, a stripling only,
His soul was knit to this his native soil.
But, as I said, old Walter was too weak
To strive with such a torrent ; when he died,
The estate and house were sold ; and all their sheep,
A pretty flock, and which, for aught I knew,
Had clothed the Ewbanks for a thousand years : —
Well — all was gone, and they were destitute ;
And Leonard, chiefly for his brother's sake,
Resolved to try his fortune on the seas.
'Tis now twelve years since we had tidings from him.
If there was one among us who had heard
That Leonard Ewbank was come down again

From the great Gavel,* down by Leeza's banks,
And down the Enna, far as Egremont,
The day would be a very festival;
And those two bells of ours, which there you see —
Hanging in the open air — but, O good sir!
This is sad talk — they'll never sound for him —
Living or dead. — When last we heard of him,
He was in slavery among the Moors
Upon the Barbary coast. — 'Twas not a little
That would bring down his spirit; and no doubt,
Before it ended in his death, the youth
Was sadly cross'd — Poor Leonard! when we parted,
He took me by the hand and said to me,
If ever the day came when he was rich,
He would return, and on his father's land
He would grow old among us.

LEONARD.

If that day
Should come, 'twould needs be a glad day for him;
He would himself, no doubt, be happy then
As any that should meet him —

PRIEST.

Happy! Sir —

LEONARD.

You said his kindred all were in their graves,
And that he had one brother —

* The great Gavel, so called, I imagine, from its resemblance to the gable end of a house, is one of the highest of the Cumberland mountains. It stands at the head of the several vales of Ennerdale, Wastdale, and Borrowdale. The Leeza is a river which flows into the Lake of Ennerdale: on issuing from the lake, it changes its name, and is called the End, Eyne, or Enna. It falls into the sea a little below Egremont.

PRIEST.

That is but
A fellow tale of sorrow. From his youth
James, though not sickly, yet was delicate;
And Leonard being always by his side,
Had done so many offices about him,
That, though he was not of a timid nature,
Yet still the spirit of a mountain boy
In him was somewhat check'd; and when his brother
Was gone to sea, and he was left alone,
The little colour that he had was soon
Stolen from his cheek; he droop'd, and pined, and pined —

LEONARD.

But these are all the graves of full-grown men!

PRIEST.

Ay, sir, that pass'd away: we took him to us;
He was the child of all the dale — he lived
Three months with one, and six months with another;
And wanted neither food, nor clothes, nor love:
And many, many happy days were his.
But, whether blithe or sad, 'tis my belief
His absent brother still was at his heart.
And, when he lived beneath our roof, we found
(A practice till this time unknown to him)
That often, rising from his bed at night,
He in his sleep would walk about, and sleeping
He sought his brother Leonard. — You are moved!
Forgive me, sir: before I spoke to you,
I judged you most unkindly.

LEONARD.

But this youth,
How did he die at last?

PRIEST.

One sweet May morning
(It will be twelve years since when spring returns)
He had gone forth among the new-dropp'd lambs,
With two or three companions, whom it chanced
Some further business summon'd to a house
Which stands at the dale-head. James, tired perhaps,
Or from some other cause, remain'd behind.
You see yon precipice; it almost looks
Like some vast building made of many crags;
And in the midst is one particular rock
That rises like a column from the vale,
Whence by our shepherds it is call'd THE PILLAR.
James pointed to its summit, over which
They all had purposed to return together,
And told them that he there would wait for them;
They parted, and his comrades pass'd that way
Some two hours after, but they did not find him
Upon the summit — at the appointed place.
Of this they took no heed: but one of them,
Going by chance, at night, into the house
Which at that time was James's home, there learn'd
That nobody had seen him all that day:
The morning came, still he was unheard of:
The neighbours were alarm'd, and to the brook
Some went, and some towards the lake: ere noon
They found him at the foot of that same rock —
Dead, and with mangled limbs. The third day after,
I buried him, poor youth, and there he lies!

LEONARD.

And that then *is* his grave? Before his death
You said that he saw many happy years?

PRIEST.

Ay, that he did —

LEONARD.

And all went well with him? —

PRIEST.

If he had one, the youth had twenty homes.

LEONARD.

And you believe, then, that his mind was easy? —

PRIEST.

Yes, long before he died he found that time
Is a true friend to sorrow; and unless
His thoughts were turn'd on Leonard's luckless fortune,
He talked about him with a cheerful love.

LEONARD.

He could not come to an unhallow'd end!

PRIEST.

Nay, God forbid! — You recollect I mention'd
A habit which disquietude and grief
Had brought upon him; and we all conjectured
That, as the day was warm, he had lain down
Upon the grass, — and, waiting for his comrades,
He there had fallen asleep; that in his sleep
He to the margin of the precipice
Had walk'd, and from the summit had fallen headlong;
And so no doubt he perish'd: at the time,
We guess, that in his hands he must have had
His shepherd's staff; for midway in the cliff
Had been caught; and there for many years
Hung — and moulder'd there.

The Priest here ended —
A stranger would have thank'd him, but he felt

A gushing from his heart, that took away
The power of speech. Both left the spot in silence;
And Leonard, when they reach'd the churchyard gate,
As the Priest lifted up the latch, turn'd round,—
And, looking at the grave, he said, 'My Brother.'
The Vicar did not hear the words: and now,
Pointing towards the cottage, he entreated
That Leonard would partake his homely fare:
The other thank'd him with a fervent voice;
But added, that, the evening being calm,
He would pursue his journey. So they parted.
It was not long ere Leonard reach'd a grove
That overhung the road: he there stopp'd short,
And, sitting down beneath the trees, review'd
All that the Priest had said: his cherish'd hopes,
And thoughts which had been his an hour before,
All press'd on him with such a weight, that now
This vale, where he had been so happy, seem'd
A place in which he could not bear to live:
So he relinquish'd all his purposes.
He travell'd on to Egremont: and thence,
That night, he wrote a letter to the Priest,
Reminding him of what had pass'd between them;
And adding, with a hope to be forgiven,
That it was from the weakness of his heart
He had not dared to tell him who he was.

This done, he went on shipboard, and is now
A seaman, a grey-haired mariner.

MICHAEL.

MICHAEL.

A PASTORAL POEM.

If from the public way you turn your steps
Up the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
You will suppose that with an upright path,
Your feet must struggle; in such bold ascent
The pastoral mountains front you, face to face.
But, courage! for beside that boist'rous brook
The mountains have all open'd out themselves,
And made a hidden valley of their own.
No habitation there is seen; but such
As journey thither find themselves alone
With a few sheep, with rocks and stones, and kites
That overhead are sailing in the sky.
It is in truth an utter solitude;
Nor should I have made mention of this dell
But for one object which you might pass by,
Might see and notice not. Beside the brook
There is a straggling heap of unhewn stones!
And to that place a story appertains,
Which, though it be ungarnish'd with events,
Is not unfit, I deem, for the fireside,
Or for the summer shade. It was the first,
The earliest of those tales that spake to me
Of shepherds, dwellers in the valley, men
Whom I already loved — not verily
For their own sakes, but for the fields and hills
Where was their occupation and abode.
And hence this tale, while I was yet a boy
Careless of Books, yet having felt the power
Of Nature, by the gentle agency
Of natural objects led me on to feel
For passions that were not my own, and think
(At random and imperfectly indeed)
On man, the heart of man, and human life.

Therefore, although it be a history
Homely and rude, I will relate the same
For the delight of a few natural hearts;
And, with yet fonder feeling, for the sake
Of youthful poets, who among these hills
Will be my second self when I am gone.

Upon the forest-side in Grasmere Vale
There dwelt a shepherd, Michael was his name;
An old man, stout at heart, and strong of limb.
His bodily frame had been, from youth to age,
Of an unusual strength; his mind was keen,
Intense and frugal, apt for all affairs,
And in his shepherd's calling he was prompt
And watchful more than ordinary men.
Hence he had learn'd the meaning of all winds,
Of blasts of every tone; and, oftentimes,
When others heeded not, he heard the south
Make subterraneous music, like the noise
Of bagpipers on distant Highland hills.
The shepherd, at such warning, of his flock
Bethought him, and he to himself would say:
'The winds are now devising work for me!'
And, truly, at all times, the storm that drives
The traveller to a shelter, summon'd him
Up to the mountains: he had been alone
Amid the heart of many thousand mists,
That came to him and left him on the heights.
So lived he till his eightieth year was past;
And grossly that man errs who should suppose
That the green valleys, and the streams and rocks
Were things indifferent to the shepherd's thoughts.
Fields, where with cheerful spirits he had breathed
The common air; the hills, which he so oft
Had climb'd with vigorous steps; which had impress'd
So many incidents upon his mind
Of hardship, skill, or courage, joy or fear;
Which like a book preserved the memory
Of the dumb animals, whom he had saved,
Had fed or shelter'd, linking to such acts,

So grateful in themselves, the certainty
Of honourable gain; these fields, these hills,
Which were his living being, even more
Than his own blood — what could they less? had laid
Strong hold on his affections, were to him
A pleasurable feeling of blind love,
The pleasure which there is in life itself.

His days had not been pass'd in singleness:
His helpmate was a comely matron, old —
Though younger than himself full twenty years.
She was a woman of a stirring life,
Whose heart was in her house: two wheels she had
Of antique form, this large for spinning wool,
That small for flax: and if one wheel had rest,
It was because the other was at work.
The pair had but one inmate in their house,
An only child, who had been born to them
When Michael, telling o'er his years, began
To deem that he was old, — in shepherd's phrase,
With one foot in the grave. This only son,
With two brave sheep-dogs, tried in many a storm,
The one of an inestimable worth,
Made all their household. I may truly say,
That they were as a proverb in the vale
For endless industry. When day was gone,
And from their occupations out of doors
The son and father were come home, even then
Their labour did not cease; unless when all
Turn'd to their cleanly supper-board, and there,
Each with a mess of pottage and skimm'd milk,
Sat round their basket piled with oaten cakes,
And their plain home-made cheese. Yet when their meal
Was ended, Luke (for so the son was named)
And his old father both betook themselves
To such convenient work as might employ
Their hands by the fireside; perhaps to card
Wool for the housewife's spindle, or repair
Some injury done to sickle, flail, or scythe,

Down from the ceiling, by the chimney's edge,
Which in our ancient uncouth country style,
Did with a huge projection overbrow
Large space beneath, as duly as the light
Of day grew dim, the housewife hung a lamp,
An aged utensil, which had perform'd
Service beyond all others of its kind.
Early at evening did it burn and late,
Surviving comrade of uncounted hours,
Which, going by from year to year, had found
And left the couple neither gay, perhaps,
Nor cheerful, yet with objects and with hopes,
Living a life of eager industry.
And now, when Luke was in his eighteenth year,
There by the light of this old lamp they sat,
Father and son, while late into the night
The housewife plied her own peculiar work,
Making the cottage through the silent hours
Murmur as with the sound of summer flies.
This light was famous in its neighbourhood,
And was a public symbol of the life
The thrifty pair had lived. For, as it chanced,
Their cottage on a plot of rising ground
Stood single, with large prospect, north and south,
High into Easedale, up to Dunmail-Raise.
And westward to the village near the lake;
And from this constant light, so regular
And so far seen, the house itself, by all
Who dwelt within the limits of the vale,
Both old and young, was named the 'Evening Star.'

Thus living on through such a length of years,
The shepherd, if he loved himself, must needs
Have loved his helpmate; but to Michael's heart
This son of his old age was yet more dear,—
Effect which might perhaps have been produced
By that instinctive tenderness, the same
Blind spirit, which is in the blood of all—
Or that a child, more than all other gifts,
Brings hopes with it, and forward-looking thoughts,

And stirrings of inquietude, when they
By tendency of nature needs must fail.

From such, and other causes, to the thoughts
Of the old man his only son was now
The dearest object that he knew on earth.
Exceeding was the love he bare to him,
His heart and his heart's joy! For oftentimes
Old Michael, while he was a babe in arms,
Had done him female service, not alone
For dalliance and delight, as is the use
Of fathers, but with patient mind enforced
To acts of tenderness; and he had rock'd
His cradle with a woman's hand.

And, in a later time, ere yet the boy
Had put on boy's attire, did Michael love
(Albeit of a stern, unbending mind)
To have the young one in his sight, when he
Had work by his own door, or when he sat,
With sheep before him on his shepherd's stool.
Beneath that large old oak, which near the door
Stood,—and from its enormous breadth of shade,
Chosen for the shearer's covert from the sun,
Thence in our rustic dialect was call'd
The 'Clipping Tree,' * a name which yet it bears.

There, while they two were sitting in the shade,
With others round them, earnest all and blithe,
Would Michael exercise his heart with looks
Of fond correction and reproof bestow'd
Upon the child, if he disturb'd the sheep
By catching at their legs, or with his shouts
Scared them, while they lay still beneath the shears.

And when by Heaven's good grace the boy grew up
A healthy lad, and carried in his cheek

* 'Clipping' is the word used in the North of England or shearing.

Two steady roses that were five years old,
Then Michael from a winter coppice cut
With his own hand a sapling, which he hoop'd
With iron, making it throughout, in all
Due requisites, a perfect shepherd's staff,
And gave it to the boy ; wherewith equipp'd
He as a watchman oftentimes was placed
At gate or gap, to stem or turn the flock ;
And, to his office prematurely call'd,
There stood the urchin, as you will divine,
Something between a hindrance and a help ;
And for this cause not always, I believe,
Receiving from his father hire of praise ;
Though nought was left undone which staff or voice,
Or looks, or threat'ning gestures could perform.

But soon as Luke, full ten years old, could stand
Against the mountain blasts, and to the heights,
Not fearing toil nor length of weary ways,
He with his father daily went, and they
Were as companions, why should I relate
That objects which the shepherd loved before
Were dearer now ? that from the boy there came
Feelings and animations — things which were
Light to the sun and music to the wind ;
And that the old man's heart seem'd born again ?

Thus in his father's sight the boy grew up :
And now when he had reach'd his eighteenth year,
He was his comfort and his daily hope.

While in this sort the simple household lived
From day to day, to Michael's ear there came
Distressful tidings. Long before the time
Of which I speak, the shepherd had been bound
In surety for his brother's son, a man
Of an industrious life, and ample means, —
But unforeseen misfortunes suddenly
Had press'd upon him, — and old Michael now
Was summon'd to discharge the forfeiture,

A grievous penalty, but little less
Than half his substance. This unlook'd-for claim,
At the first hearing, for a moment took
More hope out of his life than he supposed
That any old man ever could have lost.
As soon as he had gather'd so much strength
That he could look his trouble in the face,
It seem'd that his sole refuge was to sell
A portion of his patrimonial fields.
Such was his first resolve ; he thought again,
And his heart fail'd him. 'Isabel,' said he,
Two evenings after he had heard the news,
'I have been toiling more than seventy years,
And in the open sunshine of God's love
Have we all lived ; yet if these fields of ours
Should pass into a stranger's hand, I think
That I could not lie quiet in my grave.
Our lot is a hard lot ; the sun itself
Has scarcely been more diligent than I,
And I have lived to be a fool at last
To my own family. An evil man
That was, and made an evil choice, if he
Were false to us ; and, if he were not false,
There are ten thousand to whom loss like this
Had been no sorrow. I forgive him — but
'Twere better to be dumb than to talk thus.
When I began, my purpose was to speak
Of remedies and of a cheerful hope.
Our Luke shall leave us, Isabel : the land
Shall not go from us, and it shall be free ;
He shall possess it free as is the wind
That passes over it. We have, thou know'st,
Another kinsman — he will be our friend
In this distress. He is a prosperous man,
Thriving in trade — and Luke to him shall go,
And with his kinsman's help and his own thrift
He quickly will repair this loss, and then
May come again to us. If here he stay,
What can be done ? Where every one is poor,
What can be gained ?' At this the old man paused,

And Isabel sat silent, for her mind
Was busy, looking back into past times.
'There's Richard Bateman,' thought she to herself,
'He was a parish-boy — at the church-door
They made a gathering for him, shillings, pence,
And half-pennies, wherewith the neighbours bought
A basket, which they fill'd with pedlar's wares;
And with this basket on his arm, the lad
Went up to London, found a master there,
Who out of many chose the trusty boy
To go and overlook his merchandise
Beyond the seas, where he grew wondrous rich,
And left estates and moneys to the poor,
And at his birthplace built a chapel floor'd
With marble, which he sent from foreign lands.'
These thoughts, and many others of like sort,
Pass'd quickly through the mind of Isabel,
And her face brightened. The old man was glad,
And thus resumed: 'Well, Isabel, this scheme
These two days has been meat and drink to me.
Far more than we have lost is left us yet.
— We have enough — I wish indeed that I
Were younger, — but this hope is a good hope.
Make ready Luke's best garments, of the best
Buy for him more, and let us send him forth
To-morrow, or the next day, or to-night:
— If he could go, the boy should go to-night.'
Here Michael ceased, and to the fields went forth
With a light heart. The housewife for five days
Was restless morn and night, and all day long
Wrought on with her best fingers to prepare
Things needful for the journey of her son.
But Isabel was glad when Sunday came
To stop her in her work; for, when she lay
By Michael's side, she through the two last nights
Heard him, how he was troubled in his sleep:
And when they rose at morning she could see
That all his hopes were gone. That day at noon
She said to Luke, while they two by themselves
Were sitting at the door, 'Thou must not go;

We have no other child but thee to lose,
None to remember — do not go away.
For if thou leave thy father, he will die.'
The youth made answer with a jocund voice;
And Isabel, when she had told her fears,
Recover'd heart. That evening her best fare
Did she bring forth, and all together sat
Like happy people round a Christmas fire.

Next morning Isabel resumed her work;
And all the ensuing week the house appear'd
As cheerful as a grove in spring; at length
The expected letter from their kinsman came,
With kind assurances that he would do
His utmost for the welfare of the boy;
To which requests were added that forthwith
He might be sent to him. Ten times or more
The letter was read over; Isabel
Went forth to show it to the neighbours round;
Nor was there at that time on English land
A prouder heart than Luke's. When Isabel
Had to her house return'd, the old man said,
'He shall depart to-morrow.' To this word
The housewife answer'd, talking much of things
Which, if at such short notice, he should go,
Would surely be forgotten. But at length
She gave consent, and Michael was at ease.

Near the tumultuous brook of Greenhead Ghyll,
In that deep valley, Michael had design'd
To build a sheepfold; and, before he heard
The tidings of his melancholy loss,
For this same purpose he had gather'd up
A heap of stones, which by the streamlet's edge
Lay thrown together, ready for the work.
With Luke that evening thitherward he walk'd;
And soon as they had reach'd the place he stopp'd,
And thus the old man spake to him: — 'My son,
To morrow thou wilt leave me: with full heart
I look upon thee, for thou art the same

That wert a promise to me ere thy birth,
And all thy life hast been my daily joy.
I will relate to thee some little part
Of our two histories ; 'twill do thee good
When thou art from me, even if I should speak
Of things thou canst not know of. After thou
First cam'st into the world — as it befalls
To new-born infants — thou didst sleep away
Two days, and blessings from thy father's tongue
Then fell upon thee. Day by day pass'd on,
And still I loved thee with increasing love.
Never to living ear came sweeter sounds
Than when I heard thee by our own fireside
First uttering, without words, a natural tune ;
When thou, a feeding babe, didst in thy joy
Sing at thy mother's breast. Month follow'd month,
And in the open fields my life was pass'd,
And on the mountains, else I think that thou
Hadst been brought up upon thy father's knees.
But we were playmates, Luke : among these hills,
As well thou know'st, in us the old and young
Have play'd together, nor with me didst thou
Lack any pleasure which a boy can know.'
Luke had a manly heart ; but at these words
He sobb'd aloud. The old man grasp'd his hand,
And said, ' Nay, do not take it so — I see
That these are things of which I need not speak.
— Even to the utmost I have been to thee
A kind and a good father ; and herein
I but repay a gift which I myself
Received at others' hands ; for though now old
Beyond the common life of man, I still
Remember them who loved me in my youth.
Both of them sleep together ; here they lived,
As all their forefathers had done ; and when
At length their time was come, they were not loth
To give their bodies to the family mould.
I wish'd that thou shouldst live the life they lived.
But 'tis a long time to look back, my son,
And see so little gain from sixty years.

These fields were burthen'd when they came to me ;
Till I was forty years of age, not more
Then half of my inheritance was mine.
I toil'd and toil'd ; God bless'd me in my work,
And till these three weeks past the land was free.
— It looks as if it never could endure
Another master. Heaven forgive me, Luke,
If I judge ill for thee, but it seems good
That thou shouldst go.' At this the old man paused ;
Then, pointing to the stones near which they stood,
Thus, after a short notice, he resumed :
'This was a work for us ; and now, my son,
It is a work for me. But, lay one stone —
Here, lay it for me, Luke, with thine own hands.
Nay, boy, be of good hope ! —we both may live
To see a better day. At eighty-four
I still am strong and stout ; — do thou thy part,
I will do mine — I will begin again
With many tasks that were resign'd to thee ;
Up to the heights, and in among the storms,
Will I without thee go again, and do
All works which I was wont to do alone,
Before I knew thy face. Heaven bless thee. boy !
Thy heart these two weeks has been beating fast
With many hopes — It should be so — Yes — yes
I knew that thou couldst never have a wish
To leave me, Luke : thou hast been bound to me
Only by links of love : when thou art gone,
What will be left to us ! But I forget
My purposes. Lay now the corner-stone,
As I requested ; and hereafter, Luke,
When thou art gone away, should evil men
Be thy companions, think of me, my son,
And of this moment ; hither turn thy thoughts,
And God will strengthen thee : amid all fear
And all temptation, Luke, I pray that thou
Mayst bear in mind the life thy fathers lived,
Who, being innocent, did for that cause
Bestir them in good deeds. Now, fare thee well —
When thou return'st, thou in this place wilt see

A work which is not here : a covenant
'Twill be between us. But, whatever fate
Befall thee, I shall love thee to the last,
And bear thy memory with me to the grave.

The shepherd ended here: and Luke stoop'd down,
And, as his father had requested, laid
The first stone of the sheepfold. At the sight
The old man's grief broke from him : to his heart
He press'd his son, he kissèd him and wept ;
And to the house together they return'd
— Hush'd was that house in peace, or seeming peace,
Ere the night fell : with morrow's dawn the boy
Began his journey, and when he had reach'd
The public way, he put on a bold face ;
And all the neighbours as he pass'd their doors
Came forth with wishes and with farewell prayers,
That follow'd him till he was out of sight.

A good report did from their kinsman come,
Of Luke and his well-doing : and the boy
Wrote loving letters, full of wondrous news,
Which, as the housewife phrased it, were throughout
'The prettiest letters that were ever seen.'
Both parents read them with rejoicing hearts.
So, many months pass'd on : and once again
The shepherd went about his daily work
With confident and cheerful thoughts ; and now
Sometimes when he could find a leisure hour
He to the valley took his way, and there
Wrought at the sheepfold. Meantime Luke began
To slacken in his duty ; and at length
He in the dissolute city gave himself
To evil courses : ignominy and shame
Fell on him, so that he was driven at last
To seek a hiding-place beyond the seas.

There is a comfort in the strength of love ;
'Twill make a thing endurable, which else
Would break the heart :— old Michael found it so.

I have conversed with more than one who well
Remember'd the old man, and what he was
Years after he had heard this heavy news.
His bodily frame had been from youth to age
Of an unusual strength. Among the rocks
He went, and still look'd up upon the sun,
And listen'd to the wind; and as before
Perform'd all kinds of labour for his sheep,
And for the land, his small inheritance.
And to that hollow dell from time to time
Did he repair, to build the fold of which
His flock had need. 'Tis not forgotten yet
The pity which was then in every heart
For the old man — and 'tis believed by all
That many and many a day he thither went,
And never lifted up a single stone.
There, by the sheepfold, sometimes was he seen
Sitting alone, with that his faithful dog,
Then old, beside him, lying at his feet.
The length of full seven years from time to time
He at the building of this sheepfold wrought,
And left the work unfinish'd when he died.
Three years, or little more, did Isabel
Survive her husband: at her death th' estate
Was sold, and went into a stranger's hand.
The cottage which was named 'The Evening Star'
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood: great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood: yet the oak is left
That grew beside their door; and the remains
Of the unfinish'd sheepfold may be seen
Beside the boist'rous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

LAODAMIA.

LAODAMIA.

'WITH sacrifice, before the rising morn
Perform'd, my slaughter'd lord have I required;
And in thick darkness, amid shades forlorn,
Him of the eternal gods have I desired:
Celestial pity I again implore;—
Restore him to my sight, great Jove, restore!'

So speaking, and with fervent love endow'd
With faith, the suppliant heavenward lifts her hands;
While, like the sun emerging from a cloud,
Her countenance brightens — and her eye expands,
Her bosom heaves and spreads, her stature grows,
And she expects the issue in repose.

O terror! what hath she perceived? O joy!
What doth she look on — whom doth she behold?
Her hero slain upon the beach of Troy?
His vital presence — his corporeal mould?
It is — if sense deceive her not — 'tis he!
And a god leads him —wingèd Mercury!

Mild Hermes spake, and touch'd her with his wand
That calms all fear: 'Such grace hath crown'd thy prayer,
Laodamia, that at Jove's command
Thy husband walks the paths of upper air:
He comes to tarry with thee three hours' space;
Accept the gift; behold him face to face!'

Forth sprang the impassion'd queen her lord to clasp;
Again that consummation she essay'd;
But unsubstantial form eludes her grasp.
As often as that eager grasp was made.
The phantom parts — but parts to reunite,
And reassume his place before her sight.

'Protesilaus, lo! thy guide is gone!
Confirm, I pray, the vision with thy voice:
This is our palace,—yonder is thy throne;
Speak, and the floor thou tread'st on will rejoice.
Not to appal me have the gods bestow'd
This precious boon,—and bless'd a sad abode.'

'Great Jove, Laodamia, doth not leave
His gifts imperfect: Spectre though I be,
I am not sent to scare thee or deceive,
But in reward of thy fidelity.
And something also did my worth obtain;
For fearless virtue bringeth boundless gain.

'Thou know'st, the Delphic oracle foretold
That the first Greek who touched the Trojan strand
Should die; but me the threat did not withhold:
A generous cause a victim did demand;
And forth I lept upon the sandy plain;
A self-devoted chief—by Hector slain.'

Supreme of heroes,—bravest, noblest, best!
Thy matchless courage I bewail no more,
That then, when tens of thousands were depress'd
By doubt, propell'd thee to the fatal shore;
Thou found'st—and I forgive thee—here thou art—
A nobler counsellor than my poor heart.

'But thou, though capable of sternest deed,
Wert kind as resolute, and good as brave;
And He, whose power restores thee, hath decreed
That thou shouldst cheat the malice of the grave;
Redundant are thy locks, thy lips as fair
As when their breath enrich'd Thessalian air.

'No spectre greets me,—no vain shadow this:
Come, blooming hero, place thee by my side!
Give, on this well-known couch, one nuptial kiss
To me, this day a second time thy bride!'
Jove frown'd in heaven: the conscious Parcæ threw
on those roseate lips a Stygian hue.

'This visage tells thee that my doom is past :
Know, virtue were not virtue if the joys
Of sense were able to return as fast
And surely as they vanish. — Earth destroys
Those raptures duly — Erebus disdains :
Calm pleasures there abide — majestic pains.

'Be taught, O faithful consort, to control
Rebellious passion ! for the gods approve
The depth, and not the tumult of the soul ;
The fervour — not the impotence of love.
Thy transports moderate ; and meekly mourn
When I depart, for brief is my sojourn ——'

'Ah wherefore ? — Did not Hercules by force
Wrest from the guardian monster of the tomb
Alcestis, a reanimated corse,
Given back to dwell on earth in beauty's bloom ?
Medea's spells dispersed the weight of years,
And Æson stood a youth 'mid youthful peers.

'The gods to us are merciful — and they
Yet further may relent : for mightier far
Than strength of nerve or sinew, or the sway
Of magic, potent over sun and star,
Is love — though oft to agony distress'd ;
And though his favourite seat be feeble woman's breast.

'But if thou goest, I follow ——' 'Peace' he said —
She look'd upon him and was calm'd and cheer'd ;
The ghastly colour from his lips had fled ;
In his deportment, shape, and mien, appear'd
Elysian beauty — melancholy grace —
Brought from a pensive though a happy place.

He spake of love, such love as spirits feel
In worlds whose course is equable and pure ;
No fears to beat away, — nor strife to heal —
The past unsigh'd for, and the future sure ;
Spake, as a witness, of a second birth
For all that is most perfect upon earth :

Of all that is most beauteous — imaged there
In happier beauty; more pellucid streams,
An ampler æther, a diviner air,
And fields invested with purpureal gleams;
Climes which the sun, who sheds the brightest day
Earth knows, is all unworthy to survey.

Yet there the soul shall enter which hath earn'd
That privilege by virtue. — 'Ill,' said he,
'The end of man's existence I discern'd,
Who from ignoble games and revelry*
Could draw, when we had parted, vain delight,
While tears were thy best pastime, — day and night:

'And while my youthful peers, before my eyes
(Each hero following his peculiar bent),
Prepared themselves for glorious enterprise
By martial sports, — or, seated in the tent,
Chieftains and kings in council were detain'd;
What time the fleet at Aulis lay enchain'd.

'The wish'd-for wind was given: — I then revolved
Our future course, upon the silent sea;
And if no worthier led the way, resolved
That, of a thousand vessels, mine should be
The foremost prow in pressing to the strand,—
Mine the first blood that tinged the Trojan sand.

'Yet bitter, ofttimes bitter, was the pang
When of thy loss I thought, belovèd wife;
On thee too fondly did my memory hang,
And on the joys we shared in mortal life, —
The paths which we had trod – these fountains – flowers;
My new-plann'd cities, and unfinished towers.

'But should suspense permit the foe to cry,
"Behold they tremble! — haughty their array,
Yet of their number no one dares to die?" —

* For this feature in the character of Protesilaus, see the 'Iphigenia in Aulis' of Euripides.

In soul I swept the indignity away :
Old frailties then recurr'd : — but lofty thought,
In act embodied, my deliverance wrought.

'And thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason, in self-government too slow ;
I counsel thee by fortitude to seek
Our bless'd reunion in the shades below.
Th' invisible world with thee hath sympathised ;
Be thy affections raised and solemnised.

'Learn by a mortal yearning to ascend
Towards a higher object : — Love was given,
Encouraged, sanction'd, chiefly for this end :
For this the passion to excess was driven —
That self might be annull'd ; her bondage prove
The fetters of a dream, opposed to love.'

Aloud she shriek'd — for Hermes reappears !
Round the dear shade she would have clung — 'tis vain :
The hours are past, — too brief had they been years ;
And him no mortal effort can detain :
Swift, toward the realms that know not earthly day,
He through the portal takes his silent way —
And on the palace floor a lifeless corse she lay.

Ah, judge her gently who so deeply loved !
Her, who, in reason's spite, yet without crime,
Was in a trance of passion thus removed ;
Deliver'd from the galling yoke of time,
And these frail elements — to gather flowers
Of blissful quiet 'mid unfading bowers.

Yet tears to human suffering are due ;
And mortal hopes defeated and o'erthrown
Are mourn'd by man, and not by man alone,
As fondly he believes. — Upon the side
Of Hellespont (such faith was entertain'd)

A knot of spiry trees for ages grew
From out the tomb of him for whom she died;
And ever, when such stature they had gain'd
That Ilium's walls were subject to their view,
The Trees' tall summits wither'd at the sight;
A constant interchange of growth and blight!

SONNETS.

SONNETS.

Prefatory.

NUNS fret not at their convent's narrow room ;
And hermits are contented with their cells ;
And students with their pensive citadels ;
Maids at the wheel, the weaver at his loom,
Sit blithe and happy ; bees that soar for bloom,
High as the highest peak on Furness Fells,
Will murmur by the hour in foxglove bells :
In truth, the prison, unto which we doom
Ourselves, no prison is : and hence to me,
In sundry moods, 'twas pastime to be bound
Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground :
Pleased if some souls (for such there needs must be)
Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,
Should find short solace there, as I have found.

'WEAK is the will of man, his judgment blind ;
Remembrance persecutes, and hope betrays ;
Heavy is woe ; and joy, for human kind,
A mournful thing, so transient is the blaze !'
Thus might *he* paint our lot of mortal days
Who wants the glorious faculty assign'd
To elevate the more than reasoning mind,
And colour life's dark cloud with orient rays.
Imagination is that sacred power,
Imagination lofty and refined :
'Tis hers to pluck the amaranthine flower
Of faith, and round the sufferer's temples bind
Wreaths that endure affliction's heaviest shower,
And do not shrink from sorrow's keenest wind.

EVEN as a dragon's eye that feels the stress
Of a bedimming sleep, or as a lamp
Sullenly glaring through sepulchral damp,
So burns yon taper 'mid its black recess
Of mountains, silent, dreary, motionless :
The lake below reflects it not ; the sky,
Muffled in clouds, affords no company
To mitigate and cheer its loneliness.
Yet round the body of that joyless thing,
Which sends so far its melancholy light,
Perhaps are seated in domestic ring
A gay society with faces bright,
Conversing, reading, laughing ; or they sing,
While hearts and voices in the song unite.

MARK the concentred hazels that enclose
Yon old grey stone, protected from the ray
Of noontide suns : and even the beams that play
And glance, while wantonly the rough wind blows,
Are seldom free to touch the moss that grows
Upon that roof — amid embowering gloom,
The very image framing of a tomb,
In which some ancient chieftain finds repose
Among the lonely mountains. Live, ye trees !
And thou, grey stones, the pensive likeness keep
Of a dark chamber where the mighty sleep :
For more than fancy to the influence bends
When solitary Nature condescends
To mimic Time's forlorn humanities.

From the Italian of Michael Angelo.

YES ! hope may with my strong desire keep pace,
And I be undeluded, unbetray'd ;
For if of our affections none find grace
In sight of Heaven, then wherefore hath God made
The world which we inhabit ! Better plea
Love cannot have, than that in loving thee
Glory to that eternal peace is paid,

Who such divinity to thee imparts
As hallows and makes pure all gentle hearts.
His hope is treacherous only whose love dies
With beauty, which is varying every hour:
But, in chaste hearts uninfluenced by the power
Of outward change, there blooms a deathless flower
That breathes on earth the air of paradise.

THE prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,
If Thou the spirit give by which I pray:
My unassisted heart is barren clay,
Which of its native self can nothing feed:
Of good and pious works Thou art the seed,
Which quickens only where Thou says't it may
Unless thou show to us Thine own true way
No man can find it: Father! Thou must lead.
Do Thou, then, breathe those thoughts into my mind
By which such virtue may in me be bred
That in Thy holy footsteps I may tread;
The fetters of my tongue do Thou unbind,
That I may have the power to sing of Thee,
And sound Thy praises everlastingly.

THE world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!
This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours
And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers;
For this, for everything, we are out of tune;
It moves us not. Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus coming from the sea,
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.

Composed on Westminster Bridge, Sept. 3rd, 1803.

EARTH has not anything to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This city now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields and to the sky,
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

WITH how sad steps, O Moon, thou climb'st the sky,
How silently, and with how wan a face?
Where art thou? Thou whom I have seen on high
Running among the clouds a wood-nymph's race!
Unhappy nuns, whose common breath's a sigh
Which they would stifle, move at such a pace!
The northern wind, to call thee to the chase,
Must blow to-night his bugle-horn. Had I
The power of Merlin, goddess! this should be:
And all the stars now shrouded up in heaven,
Should sally forth, to keep thee company.
What strife would then be yours, fair creatures, driven,
Now up, now down, and sparkling in your glee!
But, Cynthia, should to thee the palm be given,
Queen, both for beauty and for majesty.

To Sleep.

A FLOCK of sheep that leisurely pass by,
One after one; the sound of rain, and bees
Murmuring; the fall of rivers, winds and seas,
Smooth fields, white sheets of water, and pure sky;
I've thought of all by turns; and still I lie

Sleepless ; and soon the small birds' melodies
Must hear, first utter'd from my orchard trees ;
And the first cuckoo's melancholy cry.
Even thus last night, and two nights more, I lay,
And could not win thee, Sleep ! by any stealth :
So do not let me wear to-night away :
Without thee what is all the morning's wealth ?
Come, blessèd barrier betwixt day and day,
Dear mother of fresh thoughts and joyous health !

'BELOVED VALE !' I said, 'when I shall con
Those many records of my childish years,
Remembrance of myself and of my peers
Will press me down ; to think of what is gone
Will be an awful thought, if life have one.'
But, when into the Vale I came, no fears
Distress'd me ; I look'd round, I shed no tears ;
Deep thought, or awful vision, I had none.
By thousand petty fancies I was cross'd,
To see the trees, which I had thought so tall,
Mere dwarfs ; the brooks so narrow, fields so small,
A juggler's balls old Time about him toss'd ;
I look'd, I stared, I smiled, I laugh'd ; and all
The weight of sadness was in wonder lost.

TO LIBERTY.

Composed in the valley, near Dover, on the day of Landing.

Dear fellow-traveller, here we are once more !
The cock that crows, the smoke that curls, that sound
Of bells,— those boys who in yon meadow-ground
In white-sleeved shirts are playing,— and the roar

Of the waves breaking on the chalky shore,—
All, all are English. Oft have I lookèd round
With joy in Kent's green vales; but never found
Myself so satisfied in heart before.
Europe is yet in bonds; but let that pass,
Thought for another moment. Thou art free,
My country! and 'tis joy enough and pride
For one hour's perfect bliss, to tread the grass
Of England once again, and hear and see,
With such a dear companion at my side.

September, 1802.

INLAND, within a hollow vale, I stood;
And saw, while sea was calm and air was clear,
The coast of France—the coast of France how near!
Drawn almost into frightful neighbourhood.
I shrunk, for verily the barrier flood
Was like a lake, or river bright and fair,
A span of waters; yet what power was there!
What mightiness for evil and for good!
Even so doth God protect us if we be
Virtuous and wise. Winds blow and waters roll,
Strength to the brave, and power, and deity,
Yet in themselves are nothing! One decree
Spake laws to *them*, and said that by the soul
Only the nations shall be great and free.

Thought of a Briton on the Subjugation of Switzerland.

TWO voices are there—one is of the sea,
One of the mountains—each a mighty voice:
In both from age to age, thou didst rejoice,
They were thy chosen music, Liberty!
There came a tyrant, and with holy glee
Thou fought'st against him; but hast vainly striven,
Thou from thy Alpine holds at length art driven,
Where not a torrent murmurs heard by thee.

Of one deep bliss thine ear hath been bereft :
Then cleave, O cleave to that which still is left ;
For, high-soul'd maid, what sorrow would it be
That mountain floods should thunder as before,
And ocean bellow from his rocky shore,
And neither awful voice be heard by thee !

Written in London, September, 1802.

O FRIEND ! I know not which way I must look
For comfort, being, as I am, oppress'd
To think that now our life is only dress'd
For show ; mean handiwork of craftsman, cook,
Or groom ! We must run glittering like a brook
In the open sunshine, or we are unblest :
The wealthiest man among us is the best :
No grandeur now, in Nature or in book,
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry ; and these we adore :
Plain living and high thinking are no more :
The homely beauty of the good old cause
Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,
And pure religion breathing household laws.

London, 1802.

MILTON ! thou shouldst be living at this hour :
England hath need of thee : she is a fen
Of stagnant waters : altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. We are selfish men :
Oh ! raise us up, return to us again ;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power.
Thy soul was like a star, and dwelt apart :
Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea ;
Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free ;
So didst thou travel on life's common way,
In cheerful godliness ; and yet thy heart
The lowliest duties on itself did lay.

To Toussaint L'Ouverture.

TOUSSAINT, the most unhappy man of men !
Whether the all-cheering sun be free to shed
His beams around thee, or thou rest thy head
Pillow'd in some dark dungeon's noisome den —
O miserable chieftain ! where and when
Wilt thou find patience ? Yet die not ; do thou
Wear rather in thy bonds a cheerful brow :
Though fallen thyself, never to rise again,
Live, and take comfort. Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee : air, earth, and skies ;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee ; that hast great allies ;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

On the Extinction of the Venetian Republic.

ONCE did she hold the gorgeous East in fee ;
And was the safeguard of the West : the worth
Of Venice did not fall below her birth —
Venice, the eldest child of Liberty !
She was a maiden city, bright and free ;
No guile seduced, no force could violate ;
And when she took unto herself a mate,
She must espouse the everlasting sea.
And what if she had seen those glories fade,
Those titles vanish, and that strength decay ;
Yet shall some tribute of regret be paid
When her long life hath reach'd its final day :
Men are we, and must grieve when even the shade
Of that which once was great is pass'd away.

On the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

CLARKSON ! it was an obstinate hill to climb :
How toilsome, nay, how dire it was, by thee

Is known — by none, perhaps, so feelingly ;
But thou, who, starting in thy fervent prime,
Didst first lead forth this pilgrimage sublime,
Hast heard the constant voice its charge repeat,
Which, out of the young heart's oracular seat,
First roused thee, O true yoke-fellow of time.
With unabating effort, see, the palm
Is won, and by all nations shall be worn !
The bloody writing is for ever torn,
And thou henceforth shalt have a good man's calm,
A great man's happiness ; thy zeal shall find
Repose at length, firm friend of human kind !

SAY, what is Honour ? 'Tis the finest sense
Of *justice* which the human mind can frame,
Intent each lurking frailty to disclaim,
And guard the way of life from all offence
Suffer'd or done. When lawless violence
A kingdom doth assault, and in the scale
Of perilous war her weightiest armies fail,
Honour is hopeful elevation — whence
Glory — and Triumph. Yet with politic skill
Endanger'd states may yield to terms unjust,
Stoop their proud heads — but not unto the dust,
A foe's most favourite purpose to fulfil !
Happy occasions oft by self-mistrust
Are forfeited ; but infamy doth kill.

GREAT MEN have been among us ; hands that penn'd
And tongues that utter'd wisdom, better none :
The later Sydney, Marvel, Harrington,
Young Vane and others who call'd Milton friend.
These moralists could act and comprehend :
They knew how genuine glory was put on ;
Taught us how rightfully a nation shone
In splendour : what strength was, that would not bend
But in magnanimous meekness. France, 'tis strange
Hath brought forth no such souls as we had then.

Perpetual emptiness ! unceasing change !
No single volume paramount, no code,
No master spirit, no determined road ;
But equally a want of books and men !

IT is not to be thought of that the flood
Of British freedom, which, to the open sea
Of the world's praise, from dark antiquity
Hath flow'd, 'with pomp of waters unwithstood'—
Road by which all might come and go that would,
And bear out freights of worth to foreign lands ;
That this most famous stream in bogs and sands
Should perish, and to evil and to good
Be lost for ever. In our halls is hung
Armoury of the invincible knights of old :
We must be free or die, who speak the tongue
That Shakspeare spake — the faith and morals hold
Which Milton held. In everything we're sprung
Of earth's first blood, have titles manifold.

WHEN I have borne in my memory what has tamed
Great nations, how ennobling thoughts depart
When men change swords for ledgers, and desert
The student's bower for gold, some fears unnamed
I had, my country ! — am I to be blamed ?
But when I think of thee, and what thou art,
Verily, in the bottom of my heart,
Of those unfilial fears I am ashamed.
But dearly must we prize thee ; we who find
In thee a bulwark of the cause of men ;
And I, by my affection, was beguiled.
What wonder if a poet now and then,
Among the many movements of his mind,
Felt for thee as a lover or a child.

THERE is a bondage which is worse to bear
Than his who breathes, by roof, and floor, and wall,

Pent in a tyrant's solitary thrall :
'Tis his who walks about in the open air,
One of a nation who, henceforth, must wear
Their fetters in their souls. For who could be
Who, even the best, in such condition, free
From self-reproach, reproach which he must share
With human nature? Never be it ours
To see the sun how brightly it will shine,
And know that noble feelings, manly powers,
Instead of gathering strength must droop and pine,
And earth, with all her pleasant fruits and flowers,
Fade, and participate in man's decline.

Indignation of a high-minded Spaniard.

WE can endure that he should waste our lands,
Despoil our temples,—and by sword and flame
Return us to the dust from which we came ;
Such food a Tyrant's appetite demands :
And we can brook the thought that by his hands
Spain may be o'erpower'd, and he possess,
For his delight, a solemn wilderness,
Where all the brave lie dead. But when of bands,
Which he will break for us, he dares to speak,—
Of benefits, and of a future day
When our enlighten'd minds shall bless his sway,
Then, the strain'd heart of fortitude proves weak :
Our groans, our blushes, our pale cheeks declare
That he has power t' inflict what we lack strength to bear

1811.

HERE pause ; the Poet claims at least this praise
That virtuous liberty hath been the scope
Of his pure song, which did not shrink from hope
In the worst moment of these evil days ;
From hope, the paramount *duty* that Heaven lay,
For its own honour, on man's suffering heart.
Never may from our souls one truth depart,

That an *accursed* thing it is to gaze
On prosperous tyrants with a dazzled eye;
Nor, touch'd with due abhorrence of *their* guilt
For whose dire ends tears flow, and blood is spilt,
And justice labours in extremity,
Forget thy weakness, upon which is built,
O wretched man, the throne of tyranny!

MINOR POEMS

MINOR POEMS

FRENCH REVOLUTION,

As it appeared to Enthusiasts at its commencement.

O, pleasant exercise of hope and joy!
For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, we who were strong in love!
Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive,
But to be young was very heaven! O times?
In which the meagre, stale, forbidding ways
Of custom, law, and statute, took at once
The attraction of a country in romance!
When Reason seem'd the most to assert her rights,
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress — to assist the work,
Which then was going forward in her name!
Not favour'd spots alone, but the whole earth,
The beauty wore of promise — that which sets
(To take an image which was felt no doubt
Among the bowers of paradise itself)
The budding rose above the rose full blown.
What temper at the prospect did not wake
To happiness unthought of? The inert
Were roused, and lively natures rapt away!
They who had fed their childhood upon dreams,
The playfellows of fancy, who had made
All powers of swiftness, subtility, and strength
Their ministers, — who in lordly wise had stirr'd
Among the grandest objects of the sense,
And dealt with whatsoever they found there
As if they had within some lurking right
To wield it; — they, too, who of gentle mood
Had watch'd all gentle motions, and to these

Had fitted their own thoughts, schemers more mild,
And in the region of their peaceful selves ; —
Now was it that *both* found, the meek and lofty
Did both find helpers to their heart's desire,
And stuff at hand, plastic as they could wish, —
Were call'd upon to exercise their skill,
Not in Utopia, — subterraneous fields, —
Or some secreted island, Heaven knows where !
But in the very world, which is the world
Of all of us — the place where in the end
We find our happiness, or not at all !

FIDELITY.

A BARKING sound the shepherd hears,
A cry as of a dog or fox ;
He halts and searches with his eyes
Among the scatter'd rocks ;
And now at distance can discern
A stirring in a brake of fern ;
And instantly a dog is seen
Glancing from that covert green.

The dog is not of mountain breed ;
Its motions, too, are wild and shy ;
With something, as the shepherd thinks,
Unusual in its cry :
Nor is there any one in sight
All round, in hollow or on height ;
Nor shout, nor whistle strikes his ear ; —
What is the creature doing here ?

It was a cove, a huge recess,
That keeps till June December's snow ;
A lofty precipice in front,
A silent tarn* below !

* 'Tarn' is a small mere or lake, mostly high up in the mountains.

Far in the bosom of Helvellyn,
Remote from public road or dwelling,
Pathway, or cultivated land;
From trace of human foot or hand.

There sometimes doth a leaping fish
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer;
The crags repeat the raven's croak,
In symphony austere;
Thither the rainbow comes — the cloud —
And mists that spread the flying shroud;
And sunbeams: and the sounding blast,
That, if it could, would hurry past,
But that enormous barrier binds it fast.

Not free from boding thoughts, a while
The shepherd stood; then makes his way
Towards the dog, o'er rocks and stones,
As quickly as he may;
Nor far had gone before he found
A human skeleton on the ground;
The appall'd discoverer with a sigh
Looks round, to learn the history.

From those abrupt and perilous rocks
The man had fallen, that place of fear!
At length upon the shepherd's mind
It breaks, and all is clear:
He instantly recall'd the name,
And who he was, and whence he came;
Remember'd, too, the very day
On which the traveller pass'd this way.

But hear a wonder, for whose sake
This lamentable tale I tell!
A lasting monument of words
This wonder merits well.
The dog, which still was hovering nigh,
Repeating the same timid cry,
This dog had been through three months' space
A dweller in that savage place.

Yes, proof was plain that since the day
On which the traveller thus had died
The dog had watch'd about the spot,
Or by his master's side:
How nourish'd here through such long time
He knows, who gave that love sublime,
And gave that strength of feeling, great
Above all human estimate.

THE HORN OF EGREMONT CASTLE.

WHEN the brothers reach'd the gateway,
Eustace pointed with his lance
To the horn which there was hanging;
Horn of the inheritance.
Horn it was which none could sound,
No one upon living ground,
Save he who came as rightful heir
To Egremont's domains and castle fair.

Heirs from ages without record
Had the House of Lucie born,
Who of right had claim'd the lordship
By the proof upon the horn:
Each at the appointed hour
Tried the horn,—it own'd his power;
He was acknowledged: and the blast,
Which good Sir Eustace sounded, was the last.

With his lance Sir Eustace pointed,
And to Hubert thus said he:
'What I speak this horn shall witness
For thy better memory.
Hear, then, and neglect me not!
At this time, and on this spot,
The words are utter'd from my heart,
's my last earnest prayer ere we depart.

'On good service we are going
Life to risk by sea and land;
In which course if Christ our Saviour
Do my sinful soul demand,
Hither come thou back straightway,
Hubert, if alive that day;
Return, and sound the horn, that we
May have a living house still left in thee!'

'Fear not,' quickly answered Hubert;
'As I am thy father's son,
What thou asketh, noble brother,
With God's favour shall be done.'
So were both right well content:
From the castle forth they went;
And at the head of their array
To Palestine the brothers took their way.

Side by side they fought (the Lucies
Were a line for valour famed),
And where'er their strokes alighted,
There the Saracens were tamed.
Whence, then, could it come, the thought
By what evil spirit brought?
Oh! can a brave man wish to take
His brother's life, for land's and castle's sake?

'Sir,' the ruffians said to Hubert,
'Deep he lies in Jordan flood.'
Stricken by this ill assurance,
Pale and trembling Hubert stood.
'Take your earnings. Oh! that I
Could have *seen* my brother die!
It was a pang that vex'd him then!
And oft return'd — again, and yet again.

Months pass'd on, and no Sir Eustace
Nor of him were tidings heard.
Wherefore, bold as day, the murderer
Back again to England steer'd.

To his castle Hubert sped ;
He has nothing now to dread.
But silent and by stealth he came,
And at an hour which nobody could name.

None could tell if it were night-time,
Night or day, at even or morn ;
For the sound was heard by no one
Of the proclamation horn.
But bold Hubert lives in glee :
Months and years went smilingly ;
With plenty was his table spread ;
And bright the lady is who shares his bed.

Likewise he had sons and daughters ;
And, as good men do, he sate
At his board by these surrounded,
Flourishing in fair estate.
And, while thus in open day,
Once he sate, as old books say,
A blast was utter'd from the horn,
Where, by the castle gate, it hung forlorn.

'Tis the breath of good Sir Eustace !
He is come to claim his right :
Ancient castle, woods, and mountains
Hear the challenge with delight.
Hubert ! though the blast be blown,
He is helpless and alone :
Thou hast a dungeon, speak the word !
And there he may be lodged, and thou be lord.

Speak ! — astounded Hubert cannot ;
And if power to speak he had,
All are daunted, all the household,
Smitten to the heart and sad,
'Tis Sir Eustace : if it be
Living man, it must be he !
Thus Hubert thought in his dismay,
And by a postern gate he slunk away.

Long, and long was he unheard of:
To his brother then he came,
Made confession, ask'd forgiveness,
Ask'd it by a brother's name,
And by all the saints in heaven;
And of Eustace was forgiven:
Then in a convent went to hide
His melancholy head, and there he died.

But Sir Eustace, whom good angels
Had preserved from murderers' hands,
And from pagan chains had rescued,
Lived with honour on his lands.
Sons he had, saw sons of theirs:
And through ages, heirs of heirs,
A long posterity renown'd,
Sounded the horn which they alone could sound.

WE ARE SEVEN.

A simple child
That lightly draws its breath,
And feels its life in every limb,
What should it know of death?

I met a little cottage girl:
She was eight years old she said;
Her hair was thick with many a curl
That cluster'd round her head.

She had a rustic, woodland air,
And she was wildly clad;
Her eyes were fair, and very fair;
— Her beauty made me glad.

'Sisters and brothers, little maid,
How many may you be?'

'How many? Seven in all,' she said,
And wondering look'd at me.

'And where are they? I pray you tell.'
She answer'd, 'Seven are we;
And two of us at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea.

Two of us in the churchyard lie,
My sister and my brother;
And, in the churchyard cottage, I
Dwell near them with my mother.'

'You say that two at Conway dwell,
And two are gone to sea,
Yet ye are seven! — I pray you tell,
Sweet maid, how this may be?

Then did the little maid reply,
'Seven boys and girls are we;
Two of us in the churchyard lie,
Beneath the churchyard tree.'

'You run about, my little maid,
Your limbs they are alive;
If two are in the churchyard laid,
Then ye are only five.'

'Their graves are green, they may be seen,'
The little maid replied,
'Twelve steps or more from my mother's door,
And they are side by side.

My stockings there I often knit,
My kerchief there I hem;
And there upon the ground I sit —
I sit and sing to them.

And often after sunset, sir,
When it is light and fair,

I take my little porringer,
And eat my supper there.

The first that died was little Jane;
In bed she moaning lay,
Till God released her of her pain;
And then she went away.

So in the churchyard she was laid;
And all the summer dry,
Together round her grave we played,
My brother John and I.

And when the ground was white with snow,
And I could run and slide,
My brother John was forced to go,
And he lies by her side.'

'How many are you, then,' said I,
'If they two are in heaven?'
The little maiden did reply,
'O master! we are seven.

'But they are dead: those two are dead!
Their spirits are in Heaven!'
'Twas throwing words away: for still
The little maid would have her will,
And said, 'Nay, we are seven!'

THE GREEN LINNET.

BENEATH these fruit-tree boughs that shed
Their snow-white blossoms on my head,
With brightest sunshine round me spread
Of spring's unclouded weather,

In this sequester'd nook how sweet
To sit upon my orchard seat!
And flowers and birds once more to greet,
My last year's friends together.

One have I mark'd, the happiest guest
In all this covert of the blest:
Hail to thee, far above the rest
In joy of voice and pinion.
Thou, Linnet! in thy green array,
Presiding spirit here to-day,
Dost lead the revels of the May,
And this is thy dominion.

While birds, and butterflies, and flowers
Make all one band of paramours,
Thou, ranging up and down the bowers,
Art sole in thy employment;
A life, a presence like the air,
Scattering thy gladness without care,
Too blest with any one to pair,
Thyself thy own enjoyment.

Upon yon tuft of hazel trees,
That twinkle to the gusty breeze,
Behold him perch'd in ecstasies,
Yet seeming still to hover;
There! where the flutter of his wings
Upon his back and body flings
Shadows and sunny glimmerings,
That cover him all over.

While thus before my eyes he gleams,
A brother of the leaves he seems;
When in a moment forth he teems
His little song in gushes:
As if it pleased him to disdain
And mock the form which he did feign,
While he was dancing with the train
Of leaves among the bushes.

THE SPARROW'S NEST.

BEHOLD, within the leafy shade
Those bright blue eggs together laid!
On me the chance-discover'd sight
Gleam'd like a vision of delight.—
I started — seeming to espy
The home and shelter'd bed,—
The sparrow's dwelling, which, hard by
My father's house, in wet or dry,
My sister Emmeline and I
    Together visited.

She look'd at it as if she fear'd it;
Still wishing, dreading to be near it:
Such heart was in her, being then
A little prattler among men.
The blessing of my later years
Was with me when a boy:
She gave me eyes, she gave me ears;
And humble cares, and delicate fears;
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears:
    And love, and thought, and joy.

A FAREWELL.

FAREWELL, thou little nook of mountain ground,
Thou rocky corner in the lowest stair
Of that magnificent temple which doth bound
One side of our whole vale with grandeur rare;
Sweet garden-orchard, eminently fair,
The loveliest spot that man hath ever found,
Farewell! — we leave thee to Heav'n's peaceful care,
Thee, and the cottage which thou dost surround.

Our boat is safely anchor'd by the shore,
And safely she will ride when we are gone;

The flowering shrubs that decorate our door
Will prosper, though untended and alone :
Fields, goods, and far-off chattels we have none ;
These narrow bounds contain our private store
Of things earth makes and sun doth shine upon,
Here are they in our sight — we have no more.

Sunshine and shower be with you, bud and bell !
For two months now in vain we shall be sought ;
We leave you here in solitude to dwell
With these our latest gifts of tender thought ;
Thou, like the morning, in thy saffron coat
Bright gowan, and marsh-marigold, farewell !
Whom from the borders of the lake we brought
And placed together near our rocky well.

We go for one to whom ye will be dear ;
And she will prize this bower, this Indian shed,
Our own contrivance, building without peer !
— A gentle maid, whose heart is lowly bred,
Whose pleasures are in wild fields gatherèd,
With joyousness, and with a thoughtful cheer,
She'll come to you, — to you herself will wed, —
And love the blessed life which we lead here.

Dear spot ! which we have watch'd with tender heed,
Bringing thee chosen plants and blossoms blown,
Among the distant mountains, flower and weed,
Which thou hast taken to thee as thy own,
Making all kindness register'd and known ;
Thou for our sakes, though Nature's child indeed,
Fair in thyself and beautiful alone,
Hast taken gifts which thou dost little need.

And O most constant, yet most fickle place,
That hast thy wayward moods, as thou dost show
To them who look not daily in thy face ;
Who, being loved, in love no bounds dost know,
And say'st when we forsake thee, 'Let them go !'
Thou easy-hearted thing, with thy wild race

Of weeds and flowers, till we return be slow,—
And travel with the year at a soft pace.

Help us to tell her tales of years gone by,
And this sweet spring the best beloved and best.
Joy will be flown in its mortality;
Something must stay to tell us of the rest.
Here, throng'd with primroses, the steep rock's breast
Glitter'd at evening like a starry sky;
And in this bush our sparrow built her nest,
Of which I sung one song that will not die.

O happy garden! whose seclusion deep
Hath been so friendly to industrious hours;
And to soft slumbers, that did gently steep
Our spirits, carrying with them dreams of flowers,
And wild notes warbled among leafy bowers;
Two burning months let summer overleap,
And, coming back with her who will be ours,
Into thy bosom we again shall creep.

THE SAILOR'S MOTHER.

ONE morning (raw it was and wet,
A foggy day in winter time)
A woman on the road I met,
Not old, though something past her prime:
Majestic in her person, tall and straight;
And like a Roman matron's was her mien and gait.

The ancient spirit is not dead;
Old times, thought I are breathing there;
Proud was I that my country bred
Such strength, a dignity so fair:
She begg'd an alms, like one in poor estate;
I look'd at her again, nor did my pride abate.

When from these lofty thoughts I woke,
With the first word I had to spare,
I said to her, 'Beneath your cloak,
What's that which on your arms you bear?'
She answer'd soon as she the question heard,
'A simple burthen, sir, a little singing-bird.'

And thus continuing, she said,
'I had a son, who many a day
Sail'd on the seas; but he is dead;
In Denmark he was cast away;
And I have travelled far as Hull, to see
What clothes he might have left, or other property.

'The bird and cage they both were his;
'Twas my son's bird; and neat and trim
He kept it: many voyages
His singing-bird hath gone with him;
When last he sail'd he left the bird behind,
As it might be, perhaps, from bodings of his mind.

'He to a fellow-lodger's care
Had left it, to be watch'd and fed,
Till he came back again; and there
I found it when my son was dead;
And now — God help me for my little wit —
I trail it with me, sir! he took so much delight in it.'

SHE dwelt among the untrodden ways
Beside the springs of Dove,
A maid whom there were none to praise,
And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know
  When Lucy ceased to be;
But she is in her grave, and, oh,
  The difference to me!

I TRAVELL'D among unknown men,
  In lands beyond the sea;
Nor, England! did I know till then
  What love I bore to thee.

'Tis past, that melancholy dream!
  Nor will I quit thy shore
A second time; for still I seem
  To love thee more and more.

Among the mountains did I feel
  The joy of my desire;
And she I cherish'd turn'd her wheel
  Beside an English fire.

Thy mornings show'd, thy nights conceal'd
  The bowers where Lucy play'd;
And thine is too the last green field
  That Lucy's eyes survey'd.

LOUISA.

I MET Louisa in the shade;
And, having seen that lovely maid,
Why should I fear to say
That she is ruddy, fleet, and strong;
And down the rocks can leap along,
Like rivulets in May?

And she hath smiles to earth unknown;
Smiles, that with motion of their own
Do spread, and sink, and rise;
That come and go with endless play,
And ever, as they pass away,
Are hidden in her eyes.

She loves her fire, her cottage home;
Yet o'er the moorland will she roam
In weather rough and bleak;
And, when against the wind she strains,
Oh! might I kiss the mountain rains
That sparkle on her cheek.

Take all that's mine 'beneath the moon,'
If I with her but half a noon
May sit beneath the walls
Of some old cave, or mossy nook,
When up she winds along the brook,
To hunt the waterfalls.

SHE was a phantom of delight
When first she gleam'd upon my sight;
A lovely apparition, sent
To be a moment's ornament;
Her eyes as stars of twilight fair,
Like twilight's, too, her dusky hair;
But all things else about her drawn
From May-time and the cheerful dawn;
A dancing shape, and image gay,
To haunt, to startle, and waylay.

I saw her upon nearer view,
A spirit, yet a woman too!
Her household motions light and free,
And steps of virgin liberty;
A countenance in which did meet

Sweet records, promises as sweet;
A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears, and smiles.

And now I see with eye serene
The very pulse of the machine;
A being breathing thoughtful breath,
A traveller betwixt life and death;
The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;
A perfect woman, nobly plann'd,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a spirit still, and bright
With something of an angel light.

NUTTING.

——— It seems a day
(I speak of one from many singled out),
One of those heavenly days which cannot die;
When forth I sallied from our cottage-door,*
With a huge wallet o'er my shoulders slung,
A nutting-crook in hand, and turn'd my steps
Towards the distant woods, a figure quaint,
Trick'd out in proud disguise of cast-off weeds
Which for that service had been husbanded,
By exhortation of my frugal dame.
Motley accoutrement — of power to smile
At thorns, and brakes, and brambles, — and, in truth,
More ragged than need was. Among the woods,
And o'er the pathless rocks, I forced my way,
Until at length, I came to one dear nook

* The house in which I was boarded during the time I was at school.

Unvisited, where not a broken bough
Droop'd with its wither'd leaves, ungracious sign
Of devastation, but the hazels rose
Tall and erect, with milk-white clusters hung,
A virgin scene! A little while I stood,
Breathing with such suppression of the heart
As joy delights in; and, with wise restraint
Voluptuous, fearless of a rival, eyed
The banquet,—or beneath the trees I sat
Among the flowers, and with the flowers I play'd;
A temper known to those, who, after long
And weary expectation, have been bless'd
With sudden happiness beyond all hope.
Perhaps it was a bower beneath whose leaves
The violets of five seasons reappear
And fade, unseen by any human eye;
Where fairy water-breaks do murmur on
For ever,—and I saw the sparkling foam,
And with my cheek on one of those green stones
That, fleeced with moss, beneath the shady trees,
Lay round me, scatter'd like a flock of sheep,
I heard the murmur and the murmuring sound,
In that sweet mood when pleasure loves to pay
Tribute to ease; and, of its joy secure,
The heart luxuriates with indifferent things,
Wasting its kindliness on stocks and stones,
And on the vacant air. Then up I rose,
And dragg'd to earth both branch and bough, with crash
And merciless ravage; and the shady nook
Of hazels, and the green and mossy bower,
Deform'd and sullied, patiently gave up
Their quiet being: and, unless I now
Confound my present feelings with the past,
Even then, when from the bower I turn'd away
Exulting, rich beyond the wealth of kings,
I felt a sense of pain when I beheld
The silent trees and the intruding sky.
Then, dearest maiden! move along these shades
In gentleness of heart; with gentle hand
Touch—for there is a spirit in the woods.

TO A BUTTERFLY.

STAY near me — do not take thy flight !
A little longer stay in sight !
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy !
Float near me ; do not yet depart !
Dead times revive in thee :
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art !
A solemn image to my heart,
My father's family !

Oh ! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly !
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey : — with leaps and springs
I follow'd on from brake to bush ;
But she, God love her ! fear'd to brush
The dust from off its wings.

MY heart leaps up when I behold
    A rainbow in the sky :
So was it when my life began ;
So is it now I am a man ;
    So be it when I shall grow old,
    Or let me die !
The child is father of the man ;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.

EXTRACT

From the conclusion of a Poem, composed upon leaving School.

DEAR native regions, I foretell,
From what I feel at this farewell,
That wheresoe'er my steps shall tend,
And whensoe'er my course shall end,
If in that hour a single tie
Survive of local sympathy,
My soul will cast the backward view,
The longing look, alone on you.

Thus, when the sun, prepared for rest,
Hath gain'd the precincts of the west,
Though his departing radiance fail
To illuminate the hollow vale,
A lingering light he fondly throws
On the dear hills where first he rose.

LUCY GRAY;

Or Solitude.

OFT I had heard of Lucy Gray:
And, when I cross'd the wild,
I chanced to see at break of day,
The solitary child.

No mate, no comrade, Lucy knew;
She dwelt on a wide moor,
— The sweetest thing that ever grew
Beside a human door!

You yet may spy the fawn at play,
The hare upon the green ;
But the sweet face of Lucy Gray
Will never more be seen.

'To-night will be a stormy night —
You to the town must go ;
And take a lantern, child, to light
Your mother through the snow.'

'That, father, will I gladly do !
'Tis scarcely afternoon —
The minster-clock has just struck two,
And yonder is the moon.'

At this the father raised his hook
And snapp'd a fagot band ;
He plied his work ; — and Lucy took
The lantern in her hand.

Not blither is the mountain roe :
With many a wanton stroke
Her feet disperse the powdery snow,
That rises up like smoke.

The storm came on before its time :
She wander'd up and down :
And many a hill did Lucy climb ;
But never reach'd the town.

The wretched parents all that night,
Went shouting far and wide ;
But there was neither sound nor sight
To serve them for a guide.

At daybreak on a hill they stood
That overlook'd the moor ;
And thence they saw the bridge of wood,
A furlong from their door.

And, turning homeward, now they cried,
'In heaven we all shall meet!'
— When in the snow the mother spied
The print of Lucy's feet.

Then downward from the steep hill's edge
They track'd the footmarks small;
And through the broken hawthorn hedge,
And by the long stone wall:

And then an open field they cross'd:
The marks were still the same;
They track'd them on, nor ever lost;
And to the bridge they came.

They follow'd from the snowy bank
The footmarks, one by one,
Into the middle of the plank;
And further there were none!

— Yet some maintain that to this day
She is a living child;
That you may see sweet Lucy Gray
Upon the lonesome wild.

O'er rough and smooth she trips along,
And never looks behind;
And sings a solitary song
That whistles in the wind.

THE SOLITARY REAPER.

BEHOLD her, single in the field,
Yon solitary Highland lass!
Reaping and singing by herself.
Stop here, or gently pass!

Alone she cuts, and binds the grain,
And sings a melancholy strain.
O listen! for the vale profound
Is overflowing with the sound.

No nightingale did ever chant
So sweetly to reposing bands
Of travellers in some shady haunt,
Among Arabian sands:
No sweeter voice was ever heard
In spring-time from a cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides.

Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy. far-off things,
And battles long ago:
Or is it some more humble lay,
Familiar matter of to-day?
Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
That has been, and may be again!

Whate'er the theme, the maiden sang
As if her song could have no ending;
I saw her singing at her work,
And o'er the sickle bending;—
I listen'd till I had my fill:
And, as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more.

THE PET LAMB.

A Pastoral.

THE dew was falling fast, the stars began to blink;
I heard a voice: it said, 'Drink, pretty creature, drink!'

And, looking o'er the hedge, before me I espied
A snow-white mountain lamb, with a maiden at its side.

No other sheep were near, the lamb was all alone,
And by a slender cord was tether'd to a stone;
With one knee on the grass did the little maiden kneel,
While to that mountain lamb she gave its evening meal.

The lamb, while from her hand he thus his supper took,
Seem'd to feast with head and ears; and his tail with pleasure shook.
'Drink, pretty creature, drink,' she said in such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own.

'Twas little Barbara Lewthwaite, a child of beauty rare!
I watch'd them with delight; they were a lovely pair.
Now with her empty can, the maiden turn'd away;
But ere ten yards were gone, her footsteps did she stay.

Towards the lamb she look'd; and from that shady place
I, unobserved, could see the workings of her face;
If Nature to her tongue could measured numbers bring,
Thus, thought I, to her lamb that little maid might sing—

'What ails thee, young one? What? Why pull so at thy cord?
Is it not well with thee? Well both for bed and board?
Thy plot of grass is soft, and green as grass can be;
Rest, little young one, rest; what is't that aileth thee?

'What is it thou wouldst seek? What is wanting to thy heart?
Thy limbs are they not strong? And beautiful thou art:
This grass is tender grass; these flowers they have no peers;
And that green corn, all day, is rustling in thy ears!

'If the sun be shining hot, do but stretch thy woollen chain,
This beech is standing by, its covert thou canst gain;

For rain and mountain storms, the like thou need'st not fear;—
The rain and storm are things which scarcely can come here.

'Rest, little young one, rest; thou hast forgot the day
When my father found thee first in places far away:
Many flocks were on the hills, but thou wert own'd by none;
And thy mother from thy side for evermore was gone.

'He took thee in his arms, and in pity brought thee home:
A blessed day for thee! then whither wouldst thou roam?
A faithful nurse thou hast; the dam that did thee yean
Upon the mountain-tops no kinder could have been.

'Thou know'st that twice a day I have brought thee in this can
Fresh water from the brook, as clear as ever ran;
And twice in the day, when the ground is wet with dew,
I bring thee draughts of milk, warm milk it is, and new.

'Thy limbs will shortly be twice as stout as they are now,
Then I'll yoke thee to my cart like a pony in the plough;
My playmate thou shalt be; and when the wind is cold,
Our hearth shall be thy bed, our house shall be thy fold.

It will not, will not rest!—poor creature, can it be
That 'tis thy mother's heart which is working so in thee?
Things that I know not of belike to thee are dear,
And dreams of things which thou canst neither see nor hear.
'Alas, the mountain-tops that look so green and fair!
I've heard of fearful winds and darkness that come there;
The little brooks that seem all pastime and all play,
When they are angry, roar like lions for their prey.

'Here thou needs't not dread the raven in the sky;
Night and day thou art safe,—our cottage is hard by.

Why bleat so after me? Why pull so at thy chain?
Sleep—and at break of day I will come to thee again!'

—As homeward through the lane I went with lazy feet,
This song to myself did I oftentimes repeat;
And it seem'd, as I retraced the ballad line by line,
That but half of it was hers, and one half of it was *mine*.

Again, and once again did I repeat the song;
'Nay,' said I, 'more than half to the *damsel* must belong,
For she look'd with such a look, and she spake with such a tone,
That I almost received her heart into my own.'

THE IDLE SHEPHERD-BOYS; OR, DUNGEON-GHYLL FORCE.*

A Pastoral.

I.

THE valley rings with mirth and joy;
Among the hills the echoes play
A never, never-ending song,
To welcome in the May:
The magpie chatters with delight;
The mountain raven's youngling brood
Have left the mother and the nest;
And they go rambling east and west
In search of their own food;
Or through the glittering vapours dart
In very wantonness of heart.

* *Ghyll*, in the dialect of Cumberland and Westmorland, is a short, and for the most part, a steep narrow valley, with a stream running through it. *Force* is the word universally employed in these dialects for waterfall.

II.

Beneath a rock, upon the grass,
Two boys are sitting in the sun;
It seems they have no work to do,
Or that their work is done.
On pipes of sycamore they play
The fragments of a Christmas hymn;
Or with that plant which in our dale
We call stag-horn, or fox's tail,
Their rusty hats they trim:
And thus, as happy as the day,
Those shepherds wear the time away.

III.

Along the river's stony marge
The sand-lark chants a joyous song;
The thrush is busy in the wood,
And carols loud and strong.
A thousand lambs are on the rocks,
All newly born! both earth and sky
Keep jubilee; and more than all,
Those boys with their green coronal;
They never hear the cry,
That plaintive cry! which up the hill
Comes from the depth of Dungeon-Ghyll.

IV.

Said Walter, leaping from the ground,
'Down to the stump of yon old yew
We'll for our whistles run a race.'
—— Away the shepherds flew.
They leapt—they ran—and when they came
Right opposite to Dungeon-Ghyll,
Seeing that he should lose the prize,
'Stop!' to his comrade Walter cries—
James stopp'd with no good will:
Said Walter then, 'Your task is here,
'Twill keep you working half a year.

V.

'Now cross where I shall cross — come on,
And follow me where I shall lead' —
The other took him at his word;
But did not like the deed.
It was a spot, which you may see
If ever you to Langdale go:
Into a chasm a mighty block
Hath fallen, and made a bridge of rock:
The gulf is deep below;
And in a basin black and small
Receives a lofty waterfall.

VI.

With staff in hand across the cleft
The challenger began his march;
And now, all eyes and feet, hath gain'd
The middle of the arch.
When list! he hears a piteous moan —
Again! — his heart within him dies —
His pulse is stopp'd, his breath is lost,
He totters, pale as any ghost,
And, looking down, he spies
A lamb, that in the pool is pent
Within that black and frightful rent.

VII.

The lamb had slipp'd into the stream,
And safe without a bruise or wound
The cataract had borne him down
Into the gulf profound.
His dam had seen him when he fell,
She saw him down the torrent borne;
And, while with all a mother's love
She from the lofty rocks above
Sent forth a cry forlorn,
The lamb, still swimming round and round,
Made answer to that plaintive sound.

VIII.

When he had learnt what thing it was,
That sent this rueful cry, I ween,
The boy recover'd heart, and told
The sight which he had seen.
Both gladly now deferr'd their task ;
Nor was there wanting other aid ; —
A Poet, one who loves the brooks
Far better than the sages' books,
By chance had thither stray'd ;
And there the helpless lamb he found,
By those huge rocks encompass'd round.

IX.

He drew it gently from the pool,
And brought it forth into the light :
The shepherds met him with his charge,
An unexpected sight !
Into their arms the lamb they took,
Said they, ' He's neither maim'd nor scarr'd '.
Then up the steep ascent they hied,
And placed him at his mother's side ;
And gently did the Bard
Those idle shepherd-boys upbraid,
And bade them better mind their trade.

TO H. C.

Six years old.

O THOU ! whose fancies from afar are brought ;
Who of thy words dost make a mock apparel,
And fittest to unutterable thought
The breeze-like motion and the self-born carol ;
Thou fairy voyager ! that dost float
In such clear water, that thy boat
May rather seem

To brood on air than on an earthly stream ;
Suspended in a stream as clear as sky,
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery ;
O blessed vision ! happy child !
Thou art so exquisitely wild,
I think of thee with many fears
For what may be thy lot in future years.

I thought of times when pain might be thy guest,
Lord of thy house and hospitality ;
And grief, uneasy lover ! never rest
But when she sate within the touch of thee.
Oh ! too industrious folly !
Oh ! vain and causeless melancholy !
Nature will either end thee quite ;
Or, lengthening out thy season of delight,
Preserve for thee, by individual right,
A young lamb's heart among the full-grown flocks.
What hast thou to do with sorrow,
Or the injuries of to-morrow ?
Thou art a dew-drop, which the morn brings forth,
Not framed to undergo unkindly shocks ;
Or to be trail'd along the soiling earth ;
A gem that glitters while it lives ;
And no forewarning gives ;
But, at the touch of wrong, without a strife
Slips in a moment out of life.

LINES,

Composed at Grasmere, during a walk, one evening after a stormy day, the author having just read in a newspaper that the dissolution of Mr. Fox was hourly expected.

LOUD is the Vale ! the voice is up,
With which she speaks when storms are gone,
A mighty unison of streams !
Of all her voices, one !

Loud is the Vale! — this inland depth
In peace is roaring like the sea;
Yon star upon the mountain-top
Is listening quietly.

Sad was I, even to pain depress'd,
Importunate and heavy load!
The comforter hath found me here,
Upon this lonely road;

And many thousands now are sad —
Wait the fulfilment of their fear;
For he must die who is their stay,
Their glory disappear.

A power is passing from the earth
To breathless Nature's dark abyss;
And when the mighty pass away,
What is it more than this —

That man, who is from God sent forth,
Doth yet again to God return? —
Such ebb and flow must ever be;
Then wherefore should we mourn?

THE FORCE OF PRAYER; OR, THE FOUNDING OF BOLTON PRIORY.

A Tradition.

'What is good for a bootless bene?'
With these dark words begins my tale;
And their meaning is, 'Whence can comfort spring,
When prayer is of no avail?'

'What is good for a bootless bene?'
The falconer to the lady said:
And she made answer, 'Endless sorrow!'
For she knew that her son was dead.

She knew it by the falconer's words,
And from the look of the falconer's eye;
And from the love which was in her soul
For her youthful Romilly.

—Young Romily through Barden Woods
Is ranging high and low;
And holds a greyhound in a leash,
To let slip upon buck or doe.

And the pair have reach'd that fearful chasm,
How tempting to bestride!
For lordly Wharf is there pent in
With rocks on either side.

This striding-place is call'd 'the Strid,'
A name which it took of yore:
A thousand years hath it borne that name,
And shall, a thousand more.

And hither is young Romilly come,
And what may now forbid
That he, perhaps for the hundredth time,
Shall bound across 'the Strid?'

He sprang in glee,—for what cared he
That the river was strong, and the rocks were steep?
—But the greyhound in the leash hung back,
And check'd him in his leap.

The boy is in the arms of Wharf,
And strangled by a merciless force;
For never more was young Romilly seen
Till he rose a lifeless corse.

Now there is stillness in the vale,
And long unspeaking sorrow :
Wharf shall be, to pitying hearts,
A name more sad than Yarrow.

If for a lover the lady wept,
A solace she might borrow
From death, and from the passion of death ;
Old Wharf might heal her sorrow.

She weeps not for the wedding-day
Which was to be to-morrow :
Her hope was a farther-looking hope,
And hers is a mother's sorrow.

He was a tree that stood alone,
And proudly did its branches wave ;
And the root of this delightful tree
Was in her husband's grave !

Long, long in darkness did she sit,
And her first words were, 'Let there be
In Bolton, on the field of Wharf,
A stately priory !'

The stately priory was rear'd,
And Wharf, as he moved along,
To matins join'd a mournful voice,
Nor fail'd at evensong.

And the lady pray'd in heaviness
That look'd not for relief :
And slowly did her succour come,
And a patience to her grief.

Oh ! there is never a sorrow of heart
That shall lack a timely end,
If but to God we turn and ask
Of Him to be our friend !

LINES,

Composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, on revisiting the banks of the Wye during a tour.

FIVE years have pass'd; five summers, with the length
Of five long winters! and again I hear
These waters, rolling from their mountain springs
With a sweet inland murmur.* — Once again
Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs,
Which on a wild secluded scene impress
Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect
The landscape with the quiet of the sky.
The day is come when I again repose
Here, under this dark sycamore, and view
These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard tufts,
Which, at this season, with their unripe fruits,
Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves
Among the woods and copses, nor disturb
The wild green landscape. Once again I see
These hedge-rows, hardly hedge-rows, little lines
Of sportive wood run wild; these pastoral farms
Green to the very door; and wreaths of smoke
Sent up, in silence, from among the trees!
With some uncertain notice, as might seem,
Of vagrant dwellers in the houseless woods,
Or of some hermit's cave, where by his fire
The hermit sits alone.
Though absent long,
These forms of beauty have not been to me
As is a landscape to a blind man's eye:
But oft, in lonely rooms, and 'mid the din
Of towns and cities, I have owed to them,
In hours of weariness, sensation sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart;
And passing even into my purer mind,

* The river is not affected by the tides a few miles above Tintern.

With tranquil restoration : — feelings too
Of unremember'd pleasure ; such, perhaps,
As may have had no trivial influence,
On that best portion of a good man's life,
His little, nameless, unremember'd acts
Of kindness and of love. Nor less, I trust,
To them I may have owed another gift,
Of aspect more sublime ; that blessèd mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lighten'd ; — that serene and blessèd mood,
In which th' affections gently lead us on, —
Until, the breath of this corporeal frame,
And even the motion of our human blood,
Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul :
While with an eye made quiet by the power
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
We see into the life of things.
If this
Be but a vain belief, yet, oh ! how oft,
In darkness, and amid the many shapes
Of joyless daylight ; when the fretful stir
Unprofitable, and the fever of the world,
Have hung upon the beatings of my heart,
How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee,
O sylvan Wye ! Thou wand'rer through the woods,
How often has my spirit turn'd to thee !
And now, with gleams of half-extinguish'd thought,
With many recognitions dim and faint,
And somewhat of a sad perplexity,
The picture of the mind revives again :
While here I stand, not only with the sense
Of present pleasure, but with pleasing thoughts
That in this moment there is life and food
For future years. And so I dare to hope,
Though changed, no doubt, from what I was when first
I came among these hills ; when like a roe
I bounded o'er the mountains, by the sides

Of the deep rivers, and the lonely streams,
Wherever Nature led; more like a man
Flying from something that he dreads, than one
Who sought the thing he loved. For Nature then
(The coarser pleasures of my boyish days,
And their glad animal movements all gone by)
To me was all in all. I cannot paint
What then I was. The sounding cataract
Haunted me like a passion; the tall rock,
The mountains, and the deep and gloomy wood,
Their colours and their forms, were then to me
An appetite: a feeling and a love,
That had no need of a remoter charm,
By thought supplied, or any interest
Unborrow'd from the eye. That time is past,
And all its aching joys are now no more,
And all its dizzy raptures. Not for this
Faint I, nor mourn nor murmur; other gifts
Have follow'd, for such loss, I would believe,
Abundant recompense. For I have learn'd
To look on Nature, not as in the hour
Of thoughtless youth; but hearing oftentimes
The still, sad music of humanity,
Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power
To chasten and subdue. And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things. Therefore am I still
A lover of the meadows and the woods,
And mountains; and of all that we behold
From this green earth; of all the mighty world
Of eye and ear, both what they half create,*

* This line has a close resemblance to an admirable line of Young, the exact expression of which I cannot recollect.

And what perceive ; well pleased to recognise
In Nature and the language of the sense,
The anchor of my purest thoughts, the nurse,
The guide, the guardian of my heart, and soul
Of all my moral being.
Nor perchance,
If I were not thus taught, should I the more
Suffer my genial spirits to decay ;
For thou art with me, here, upon the banks
Of this fair river ; thou, my dearest friend,
My dear, dear friend, and in thy voice I catch
The language of my former heart, and read
My former pleasures in the shooting lights
Of thy wild eyes. Oh ! yet a little while
May I behold in thee what I was once,
My dear, dear sister ! And this prayer I make,
Knowing that Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her : 'tis her privilege,
Through all the years of this our life, to lead
From joy to joy : for she can so inform
The mind that is within us, so impress
With quietness and beauty, and so feed
With lofty thoughts, that neither evil tongues,
Rash judgments, nor the sneers of selfish men,
Nor greetings where no kindness is, nor all
The dreary intercourse of daily life,
Shall e'er prevail against us, or disturb
Our cheerful faith that all which we behold
Is full of blessings. Therefore let the moon
Shine on thee in thy solitary walk ;
And let the misty mountain winds be free
To blow against thee : and, in after years,
When these wild ecstasies shall be matured
Into a sober pleasure, when thy mind
Shall be a mansion for all lovely forms,
Thy memory be as a dwelling-place
For all sweet sounds and harmonies ; oh ! then,
If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,
Should be thy portion, with what healing thoughts
Of tender joy wilt thou remember me,

And these my exhortations! nor, perchance,
If I should be where I no more can hear
Thy voice, nor catch from thy wild eyes these gleams
Of past existence, wilt thou then forget
That on the banks of this delightful stream
We stood together; and that I, so long
A worshipper of Nature, hither came,
Unwearied in that serviee: rather say
With warmer love, oh! with far deeper zeal
Of holier love. Nor wilt thou then forget,
That after many wanderings, many years
Of absence, these steep woods and lofty cliffs,
And this green pastoral landscape, were to me
More dear, both for themselves and for thy sake.

ON THE NAMING OF PLACES.

Advertisement.

By persons resident in the country and attached to rural objects, many places will be found unnamed or of unknown names, where little incidents have occurred, or feelings been experienced, which will have given to such places a private and peculiar interest. From a wish to give some sort of record to such incidents, or renew the gratification of such feelings, names have been given to places by the author and some of his friends, and the following poems written in consequence.

I.

It was an April morning: fresh and clear
The rivulet, delighting in its strength,
Ran with a young man's speed; and yet the voice
Of waters which the winter had supplied
Was soften'd down into a vernal tone.
The spirit of enjoyment and desire,
And hopes and wishes, from all living things
Went circling, like a multitude of sounds.

The budding groves appear'd as if in haste
To spur the steps of June; as if their shades
Of *various* green were hind'rances that stood
Between them and their object: yet, meanwhile,
There was such deep contentment in the air
That every naked ash, and shady tree
Yet leafless, seem'd as though the countenance
With which it look'd on this delightful day
Were native to the summer. Up the brook
I roam'd in the confusion of my heart,
Alive to all things and forgetting all.
At length I to a sudden turning came
In this continuous glen, where down a rock
The stream, so ardent in its course before,
Sent forth such sallies of glad sound, that all
Which I till then had heard, appear'd the voice
Of common pleasure: beast and bird, the lamb,
The shepherd's dog, the linnet and the thrush,
Vied with this waterfall, and made a song
Which, while I listen'd, seem'd like the wild growth
Or like some natural produce of the air,
That could not cease to be. Green leaves were here;
But 'twas the foliage of the rocks, the birch,
The yew, the holly, and the bright green thorn,
With hanging islands of resplendent furze:
And on a summit, distant a short space,
By any who should look beyond the dell,
A single mountain cottage might be seen.
I gazed and gazed, and to myself I said,
'Our thoughts at least are ours; and this wild nook,
My Emma, I will dedicate to thee.'
—— Soon did the spot become my other home,
My dwelling, and my out-of-doors abode.
And, of the shepherds who have seen me there,
To whom I sometimes in our idle talk
Have told this fancy, two or three, perhaps,
Years after we are gone and in our graves,
When they have cause to speak of this wild place,
May call it by the name of 'Emma's Dell.'

II.

To Joanna.

AMID the smoke of cities did you pass
Your time of early youth; and there you learn'd,
From years of quiet industry, to love
The living beings by your own fireside
With such a strong devotion, that your heart
Is slow towards the sympathies of them
Who look upon the hills with tenderness,
And make dear friendships with the streams and groves.
Yet we, who are transgressors in this kind,
Dwelling, retired in our simplicity,
Among the woods and fields, we love you well
Joanna! and I guess, since you have been
So distant from us now for two long years,
That you will gladly listen to discourse
However trivial, if you thence are taught
That they, with whom you once were happy, talk
Familiarly of you and of old times.

While I was seated, now some ten days past,
Beneath those lofty firs, that overtop
Their ancient neighbour the old steeple tower,
The vicar from his gloomy house hard by
Came forth to greet me; and when he had ask'd,
'How fares Joanna, that wild-hearted maid!
And when will she return to us?' he paused;
And, after short exchange of village news,
He with grave looks demanded, for what cause,
Reviving obsolete idolatry,
I like a Runic priest, in characters
Of formidable size, had chisell'd out
Some uncouth name upon the native rock,
Above the Rotha, by the forest side.
— Now, by those dear immunities of heart
Engender'd betwixt malice and true love,
I was not loth to be so catechised,

And this was my reply: — 'As it befel,
One summer morning we had walk'd abroad
At break of day, Joanna and myself.
'Twas that delightful season, when the broom,
Full-flowered, and visible on every steep,
Along the copses runs in veins of gold.
Our pathway led us on to Rotha's banks:
And when we came in front of that tall rock
Which looks towards the east, I there stopp'd short,
And traced the lofty barrier with my eye
From base to summit; such delight I found
To note in shrub and tree, in stone and flower,
That intermixture of delicate hues,
Along so vast a surface, all at once,
In one impression, by connecting force
Of their own beauty, imaged in the heart.
— When I had gazed perhaps two minutes' space,
Joanna, looking in my eyes, beheld
That ravishment of mine, and laugh'd aloud.
The rock, like something starting from a sleep,
Took up the lady's voice, and laugh'd again:
That ancient woman seated on Helm Crag
Was ready with her cavern: Hammar Scar,
And the tall steep of Silver How, sent forth
A noise of laughter; southern Loughrigg heard,
And Fairfield answer'd with a mountain tone:
Helvellyn far into the clear blue sky
Carried the lady's voice; old Skiddaw blew
His speaking trumpet; back out of the clouds
Of Glaramara southward came the voice;
And Kirkstone toss'd it from his misty head.
'Now whether,' said I to our cordial friend,
Who in the hey-day of astonishment
Smiled in my face, 'this were in simple truth
A work accomplish'd by the brotherhood
Of ancient mountains, or my ear was touch'd
With dreams and visionary impulses,
Is not for me to tell; but sure I am
That there was a loud uproar in the hills:
And, while we both were listening, to my side

The fair Joanna drew, as if she wish'd
To shelter from some object of her fear.
And hence, long afterwards, when eighteen moons
Were wasted, as I chanced to walk alone
Beneath this rock, at sunrise, on a calm
And silent morning, I sat down, and there,
In memory of affections old and true,
I chisell'd out in those rude characters
Joanna's name upon the living stone.
And I, and all who dwell by my fireside,
Have call'd the lovely rock, 'Joanna's Rock.'*

III.

THERE is an eminence, — of these our hills
The last that parleys with the setting sun.
We can behold it from our orchard-seat;
And, when at evening we pursue our walk
Along the public way, this cliff so high
Above us, and so distant in its height,
Is visible; and often seems to send
Its own deep quiet to restore our hearts.
The meteors make of it a favourite haunt:
The star of Jove, so beautiful and large
In the mid heavens, is never half so fair
As when she shines above it. 'Tis in truth
The loneliest place we have among the clouds.
And she who dwells with me, whom I have loved
With such communion, that no place on earth
Can ever be a solitude to me,
Hath to this lonely summit given my name.

* In Cumberland and Westmorland are several inscriptions upon the native rock, which, from the wasting of time and the rudeness of the workmanship, have been mistaken for Runic; they are, without doubt, Roman.

THE DAFFODILS.

I WANDER'D lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host of golden daffodils ;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretch'd in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay :
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.
The waves besides them danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee :—
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company :
I gazed — and gazed — but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought :

For oft when on my couch I lie,
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude,
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

TO A SKY-LARK.

UP with me ! up with me, into the clouds !
For thy song, Lark, is strong ;
Up with me, up with me into the clouds !
Singing, singing,
With all the heavens about thee ringing.
Lift me, guide me till I find
That spot which seems so to thy mind !

I have walk'd through wildernesses dreary,
And to-day my heart is weary;
Had I now the wings of a fairy,
Up to thee would I fly.
There is madness about thee and joy divine
In that song of thine;
Up with me, up with me, high and high,
To thy banqueting-place in the sky!
Joyous as morning,
Thou art laughing and scorning;
Thou hast a nest, for thy love and thy rest:
And, though little troubled with sloth,
Drunken Lark? thou wouldst be loth

To be such a traveller as I.
Happy, happy liver!
With a soul as strong as a mountain river,
Pouring out praise to th' Almighty Giver,
Joy and jollity be with us both!
Hearing thee, or else some other,
As merry as a brother,
I on the earth will go plodding on
By myself, cheerfully, till the day is done.

TO THE DAISY.

SWEET flower! belike, one day, to have
A place upon thy Poet's grave,
I welcome thee once more:
But he, who was on land, at sea,
My brother, too, in loving thee,
Although he loved more silently,
Sleeps by his native shore.

Ah! hopeful, hopeful was the day
When to that ship he bent his way,
To govern and to guide:

His wish was gain'd : a little time
Would bring him back in manhood's prime,
And free for life, these hills to climb,
With all his wants supplied.

And full of hope day follow'd day,
While that stout ship at anchor lay
Beside the shores of Wight ;
The May had then made all things green ;
And, floating there in pomp serene,
That ship was goodly to be seen,
His pride and his delight !

Yet then, when call'd ashore, he sought
The tender peace of rural thought ;
In more than happy mood,
To your abodes, bright daisy flowers !
He then would steal at leisure hours,
And loved you glittering in your bowers,
A starry multitude.

But hark the word ! — the ship is gone ; —
From her long course returns — anon
Sets sail : in season due,
Once more on English earth they stand :
But, when a third time from the land
They parted, sorrow was at hand
For him and for his crew.

Ill-fated vessel ! ghastly shock !
At length deliver'd from the rock,
The deep she hath regain'd ;
And through the stormy night they steer,
Labouring for life, in hope and fear,
Towards a safer shore — how near,
Yet not to be attain'd !

'Silence !' the brave commander cried ;
To that calm word a shriek replied ;
It was the last death-shriek.

A few appear by morning light,
Preserved upon the tall mast's height :
Oft in my soul I see that sight ;
But one dear remnant of the night —
For him in vain I seek.

Six weeks, beneath the moving sea,
He lay in slumber quietly ;
Unforced, by wind or wave,
To quit the ship for which he died
(All claims of duty satisfied) ;
And there they found him at her side,
And bore him to the grave.

Vain service ! yet not vainly done,
For this, if other end were none,
That he, who had been cast
Upon a way of life unmeet
For such a gentle soul and sweet,
Should find an undisturb'd retreat
Near what he loved, at last ;

That neighbourhood of grove and field
To him a resting place should yield,
A meek man and a brave !
The birds shall sing, and ocean make
A mournful murmur, for his sake ;
And thou, sweet flower, shalt sleep and wake
Upon his senseless grave !

TO THE SAME FLOWER.

BRIGHT flower, whose home is everywhere ?
A pilgrim bold in Nature's care,
And all the long year through, the heir
Of joy or sorrow,

Methinks that there abides in thee
Some concord with humanity,
Giv'n to no other flower I see
  The forest through!

Is it that man is soon depress'd?
A thoughtless thing! who, once unblest,
Does little on his memory rest,
  Or on his reason,
And thou wouldst teach him how to find
A shelter under every wind,
A hope for times that are unkind,
  And every season?

Thou wanderest the wide world about,
Uncheck'd by pride or scrupulous doubt,
With friends to greet thee, or without,
  Yet pleased and willing;
Meek, yielding to th' occasion's call,
And all things suffering from all,
Thy function apostolical
  In peace fulfilling.

LINES.

Written in early Spring.

I HEARD a thousand blended notes,
While in a grove I sat reclined,
In that sweet mood when pleasant thoughts
Bring sad thoughts to the mind.

To her fair works did Nature link
The human soul that through me ran;
And much it grieved my heart to think
What man has made of man.

Through primrose tufts, in that sweet bower,
The periwinkle trail'd its wreaths;
And 'tis my faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes.

The birds around me hopp'd and play'd;
Their thoughts I cannot measure: —
But the least motion which they made,
It seem'd a thrill of pleasure.

The budding twigs spread out their fan,
To catch the breezy air;
And I must think, do all I can,
That there was pleasure there.

If I these thoughts may not prevent,
If such be of my creed the plan,
Have I not reason to lament
What man has made of man?

ODE.

Intimations of Immortality from recollections of early Childhood.

'The child is father of the man;
And I could wish my days to be
Bound each to each by natural piety.'

I.

THERE was a time when meadow, grove, and stream,
The earth, and every common sight,
To me did seem
Apparell'd in celestial light,
The glory and the freshness of a dream.
It is not now as it has been of yore; —

Turn wheresoe'er I may,
By night or day,
The things which I have seen I now can see no more!

II.

The rainbow comes and goes,
And lovely is the rose,—
The moon doth with delight
Look round her when the heavens are bare;
Waters on a starry night
Are beautiful and fair;
The sunshine is a glorious birth;
But yet I know, where'er I go,
That there hath pass'd away a glory from the earth.

III.

Now, while the birds thus sing a joyous song,
And while the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound,
To me alone there came a thought of grief;
A timely utterance gave that thought relief,
And I again am strong.
The cataracts blow their trumpets from the steep,—
No more shall grief of mine the season wrong:
I hear the echoes through the mountains throng,
The winds come to me from the fields of sleep,
And all the earth is gay;
Land and sea
Give themselves up to jollity,
And with the heart of May
Doth every beast keep holiday;
Thou child of joy,
Shout round me, let me hear thy shouts, thou happy shepherd boy!

IV.

Ye blessèd creatures, I have heard the call
Ye to each other make; I see

The heavens laugh with you in your jubilee;
My heart is at your festival,
My head hath its coronal,
The fullness of your bliss, I feel — I feel it all.
Oh evil day! if I were sullen
While the earth herself is adorning,
This sweet May morning;
And the children are pulling,
On every side,
In a thousand valleys far and wide,
Fresh flowers; while the sun shines warm
And the babe leaps up on his mother's arms: —
I hear, I hear, with joy I hear!
— But there's a tree, of many one,
A single field which I have look'd upon,
Both of them speak of something that is gone:
The pansy at my feet
Doth the same tale repeat:
Whither is fled the visionary gleam?
Where is it now, the glory and the dream?

V.

Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The soul that rises with us, our life's star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar;
Not in entire forgetfulness.
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God, who is our home:
Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy,
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;

At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.

VI.

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own ;
Yearnings she hath in her own natural kind,
And, even with something of a mother's mind,
And no unworthy aim,
The homely nurse doth all she can
To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

VII.

Behold the child among his new-born blisses,
A six years' darling of a pigmy size !
See, where 'mid work of his own hand he lies,
Fretted by sallies of his mother's kisses,
With light upon him from his father's eyes !
See, at his feet, some little plan or chart,
Some fragment from his dream of human life,
Shaped by himself with newly-learnèd art ;
A wedding or a festival,
A mourning or a funeral ;
And this hath now his heart,
And unto this he frames his song :
Then will he fit his tongue
To dialogues of business, love, or strife ;
But it will not be long
Ere this be thrown aside,
And with new joy and pride
The little actor cons another part ;
Filling from time to time his 'humorous stage'
With all the persons, down to palsied age,
That Life brings with her in her equipage ;
As if his whole vocation
Were endless imitation.

VIII.

Thou, whose exterior semblance doth belie
Thy soul's immensity ;
Thou best philosopher, who yet dost keep
Thy heritage ; thou eye among the blind,
That, deaf and silent, read'st the eternal deep,
Haunted for ever by the eternal mind,—
Mighty Prophet ! Seer blest !
On whom those truths do rest,
Which we are toiling all our lives to find ;
Thou, over whom thy immortality
Broods like the day, a master o'er a slave,
A presence which is not to be put by ;
Thou little child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom, on thy being's height,
Why with such earnest pains dost thou provoke
The years to bring th' inevitable yoke,
Thus blindly with thy blessedness at strife.
Full soon thy soul shall have her earthly freight,
And custom lie upon thee with a weight,
Heavy as frost, and deep almost as life !

IX.

O joy ! that in our embers
Is something that doth live,
That Nature yet remembers
What was so fugitive !
The thought of our past years in me doth breed
Perpetual benedictions : not indeed
For that which is most worthy to be bless'd ;
Delight and liberty, the simple creed
Of childhood, whether busy or at rest,
With new-fledged hope still fluttering in his breast :
Not for these I raise
The song of thanks and praise ;
But for those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings ;

Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized,
High instincts, before which our mortal nature
Did tremble like a guilty thing surprised!
But for those first affections,
Those shadowy recollections,
Which, be they what they may,
Are yet the fountain light of all our day,
Are yet a master light of all our seeing;
Uphold us — cherish — and have power to make
Our noisy years seem moments in the being
Of the eternal silence: truths that wake,
To perish never;
Which neither listlessness, nor mad endeavour,
Nor man nor boy,
Nor all that is at enmity with joy,
Can utterly abolish or destroy!
Hence, in a season of calm weather,
Though inland far we be,
Our souls have sight of that immortal sea
Which brought us hither;
Can in a moment travel thither, —
And see the children sport upon the shore,
And hear the mighty waters rolling evermore.

X.

Then, sing ye birds, sing, sing a joyous song!
And let the young lambs bound
As to the tabor's sound!
We, in thought, will join your throng,
Ye that pipe and ye that play,
Ye that through your hearts to-day
Feel the gladness of the May!
What though the radiance which was once so bright
Be now for ever taken from my sight,
Though nothing can bring back the hour
Of splendour in the grass, of glory in the flower;
We will grieve not, rather find
Strength in what remains behind,

In the primal sympathy
Which having been, must ever be;
In the soothing thoughts that spring
Out of human suffering;
In the faith that looks through death,
In years that bring the philosophic mind.

XI.

And oh ye fountains, meadows, hills, and groves,
Think not of any severing of our loves!
Yet in my heart of hearts I feel your might;
I only have relinquish'd one delight,
To live beneath your more habitual sway.
I love the brooks, which down their channels fret,
Even more than when I tripp'd lightly as they:
The innocent brightness of a new-born day
Is lovely yet;
The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober colouring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality;
Another race hath been, and other palms are won.
Thanks to the human heart by which we live;
Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears;
To me the meanest flower that blows can give
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.